



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



3 3433 07480631 0

AN ANCESTRAL
INVASION AND
OTHER STORIES

MADELINE
YALE WYNNE



178

1. Fiction, American

72

AN
ANCESTRAL INVASION
And Other Stories



AN
ANCESTRAL INVASION
And Other Stories

BY
MADELINE YALE WYNNE

SELECTED BY
ANNIE CABOT PUTNAM

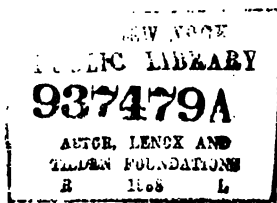


THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY NEW YORK

1920

M. S. m.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



COPYRIGHT, 1920, BY
ANNIE CABOT PUTNAM
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, INCLUDING THAT OF
TRANSLATION INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES,
INCLUDING THE SCANDINAVIAN

COPYRIGHT, 1897, 1898, BY THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY COMPANY

FROM WEB
CLUB
1919

FOREWORD

TO INTRODUCE this book of stories and imaginings to new readers is a pleasure. Many people in the Eastern and now Central States have, in later years, remembered with joy having heard some of them read by the bright friend who is gone, and are glad that they may enjoy them anew. She knew the New England country people of a generation now past, and in her presentation of their old-time ways had love and respect for them. Like Whittier, she cared to present "The unsung beauty hid life's common things below"; yet also she enjoyed their canny side. None the less her eyes could see the happy faun in the wood as well as appreciate the ingenious malice of the household imp.

Strangely gifted artist as she was with pen, brush, violin, crucible, carving-tool and cleft gemsetter's pliers, she encouraged and guided in others any gift that might by real effort be made good. Her sympathy was ready—she had for all who came near her a simple but high courtesy.

The late Mr. Philip H. Wynne, her son, and her friend Miss Anna Cabot Putnam selected and edited these stories.

EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

"For cleft, read deft"

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD BY EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.	v
CHAPTER	
I. A MASTER-HAND AT BEES . . .	3
II. AN ANCESTRAL INVASION . . .	15
III. THE UNDOING OF THE BURGLAR .	33
IV. SABRINY, DAD AND CO. . . .	45
V. A DROVE OF FACTS AND A FLOCK OF FANCIES	59
VI. A CHIP OF THE OLD BLOCK . .	65
VII. A STUDY IN HANDS	75
VIII. A FLIGHT OF FEATHERS . . .	87
IX. AN EXPERIMENT IN TIME . . .	99
X. A GAME OF SOLITAIRE	105
XI. THE HOUSE THAT STEPHEN BUILT	131
XII. IN NETHER SPACES	159

**AN
ANCESTRAL INVASION**
And Other Stories

AN ANCESTRAL INVASION

And Other Stories

A MASTER-HAND AT BEES

MARY ELLEN, you jest let that kettle alone; I'm goin' to 'tend to it myself as soon as ever I can. I'll git round to it before noon."

"I'd jest as soon wash it as not; I'm pretty nigh through with the moppin'," said Mary Ellen in a muffled tone, her head bent over the mop that she was twisting vigorously, holding the handle tightly between her knees; her mouth working with every twist of the dripping cloth, while her eyes travelled along the last strip of floor to be wiped dry.

"I don't want you should, let it alone." Sarah Emma's voice came from the buttery; the words were emphasized by thuds of the rollingpin as it flattened out the dough of the seed cakes, ready for the cutting out.

Sarah Emma was hurrying to get her baking done and out of the way. Mary Ellen was hurrying to get her mopping done and the floor

dried. They were both working with a righteous frenzy, a perfect debauch of New England conscience. The Sewing Circle of the Baptist Church at Four Corners was to meet at their house, the one annual society function under their roof. There were still many things to be done. Mary Ellen was to run up to the store, over the hill, to get a pound of black tea. Both she and Sarah Emma always drank green tea; so did most of the folks up their way, except the minister's wife; she came from the city and so she drank black tea. This seemed a distinction between lay and official religion, and it would have been most indecorous of them to have failed to provide the more chastened drink.

In her haste Mary Ellen accidentally hit, with the handle of her mop, the kettle that stood on the stone hearth, and was the cause of the flurried dispute.

"Now, Mary Ellen, *be* you goin' to let that kettle alone or not? Don't you dare to tetch it."

The voice was imperative, even a trifle threatening, and the rollingpin paused for an answer.

"I ain't a-meddling with it," was the brief reply. Sarah Emma's voice had raised the ire in Mary Ellen's righteous breast, and she made a mental reservation to the effect that she

hadn't, so far, promised *not* to wash it or meddle with it when she got ready.

Pork and greens had been boiled in the pot, it was the first mess of beet-tops that they had gathered this year; of course in the everyday march of events the kettle would have been set away till the next day so that the pork fat would rise and be skimmed off, but to-day the yearly invasion of the Sewing Circle made it imperative that every corner of the house should be made ready. The eyes of the community would be on each and every detail of their housekeeping; why otherwise have the meeting? What would there be to talk about afterward? How was any one to get at the standing of each housekeeper except by the showing at these meetings? No black pot should be a blot on their escutcheon; their reputation must remain immaculate. This was how matters had been brought to this in-harmonious condition, for Sarah Emma in a moment of unwonted slackness had said "bother the pot, let it stand over; put it out in the shed; 'tain't likely folks will investigate *that*."

But Mary Ellen was determined not to risk it and so the clash had ensued and now the pot had swelled to immense proportions in the consciousness of both sisters; it loomed upon their mental horizons a gigantic issue; it became a test of character. The pot had invaded inner shrines where the holiest imperatives lie—that sacred

precinct of the New England woman's character which is governed by will and illuminated by liberty of conscience.

Sarah Emma argued that because she had washed the other dishes it was her duty and privilege to do this as it was the most disagreeable of tasks and therefore doubly a duty. How otherwise was sweet martyrdom to be obtained?

Mary Ellen's point of view was, that as she had insisted on the kettle's being washed to-day, in violation of long-established custom, it was her duty to do it herself; besides which, Sarah Emma had been short about it and dictatorial; she was just like her aunt she was named after. Thus Mary Ellen's determination, like a dye, was fixed by the mordant of another's opposition.

In the little kitchen there was a silent but forceful conflict of wills for a short space of time; then Sarah Emma remarked in a casual tone, "I ain't baked only five dozen of these seed cakes. That ought to be enough in all conscience, along with that cup-cake, besides all the stuff that the folks will bring along; I made double the receipt. I dunno as I needed to make any, only I am so sick o' hearin' Eliza Price forever harpin' on the kind she makes, the kind she won't give the receipt of to nobody. I sort of wanted to show, oncet fur all, that some folks know somethin' about cookin' as well as

other folks. But I never would have started in ef I'd a-knownn them pesky bees would have swarmed to-day. It took me two good hours by the clock to get 'em in, though I will say I never seen a handsomer swarm, or one that took more kindly to bein' hived; their buzzin' was just as friendly as could be, not mad for a minute. It seemed as ef they fairly hankered to be took in; they crawled all over me jest as kindly as ever was, and I scooped 'em in like they was a mess o' berries in a pail. We ain't had no sech a swarm sence five years past. I dunno as I begrudge the time, though it *has* set me dreadfully behindhand. It's like tryin' to haul a cat backward by its tail to make time fur all I've got to do."

Mary Ellen did not answer this propitiatory monologue, she soused her mop and hung it up to dry in the woodshed, turned the mop-pail upside down to dry and said in a cold voice, "I guess I'll put on my sunbonnet and run over to the store for a pound of that black tea." She paused a minute and then said, in an offhand manner: "Hadn't I better jest rense out the pot, seein' as my hands is wet?"

"No, you won't, let it alone I say."

It was hot in the kitchen. June was floating in at the open door. The bees hummed about in the long row of hives under the apple trees. The cat lay in the sunny path lazily watching

the quick flirt of the unattainable cat-bird in the lilac bush.

The sweet, dry odour of caraway cookies in the oven blew through the kitchen. On the hearth sat the complacent black pot, the successful breeder of belligerency in the breasts of these kind, conscientious New England sisters. Sarah Emma in aggressive silence took the last batch of perfect discs from the oven and added them to the panful of sweetness that was cooling in the pantry window.

In an inner room Mary Ellen slipped a dark skirt on over her working dress, and tying her bonnet strings, said: "Well! ef you are so set about the pot I may as well go for that tea. I s'pose, Sarah Emma, you ain't forgot that you was to go over to cousin Jane's and borry her extry long tablecloth, the snow-drop one; there ain't a single one of urn that's long enough fur the double table."

This was said in a suppressed tone; it implied something like this—"I hope you see that I ain't got no hard feelin's on account of that pot, though you must admit yourself that you are unreasonable about it. I only hope you will have time to get your chores done before the folks begin to come."

Sarah Emma heard the meaning of the unspoken words wrapped up in the spoken words; she responded in the same counterpoint of ideas.

"I am goin' right off for that tablecloth." The thought under this was that she wasn't going to be mean enough to march up and take that kettle and wash it, right before Mary Ellen's face; she would wait till she had been over to Jane's for the tablecloth and then hurry home and wash it up before Mary Ellen got home. It was only a stone's throw over to Jane's, there would be plenty of time for the conclusive deed before Mary Ellen could possibly get back from the store.

She could see Mary Ellen's back as she climbed the steep hill that led to the Corners, she saw her nearing the brow where the road forks, and then she ran out through the garden and climbed the stone wall by the currant bushes and stood on the top of it, hanging to a low branch of an apple tree in full blossom, to steady herself while she looked along the road to watch Mary Ellen still toiling up the hill.

Now Mary Ellen knew that Sarah Emma would be watching her, so she kept her face resolutely turned toward the Corners. There was a perfect circuit of understanding between the blue calico figure on the wall and the black-skirted figure on the road.

"She's lyin' low to come back and wash up that kettle, jest as soon as she thinks I'm gone for the tablecloth," thought Sarah Emma.

"She's goin' to hurry home and git that kettle before I get there," thought Mary Ellen.

"She won't turn round, she knows I'm a-watchin'."

"She needn't think I'll turn round, I know she'll stan' there till Doomsday ef she sees me look round." So she reached the hilltop and passed over, then sat down on the bank and waited for a minute, then raising her head a little, she could see through the veil of grass tops the blue figure on the wall. It stood still a little while and then clambered down on the orchard side and ran across lots toward Jane's.

Then Mary Ellen got up and ran down the hill back home. She had arranged a perfectly good reason for going back: she had purposely forgotten the money for the tea. As she ran she pictured it to herself: it lay in the Lowestoft sugarbowl that had been her great-grandmother's; it was now the family treasury. She could see with a sort of inner sight the fifty-cent piece and three silver quarters lying in the bottom; this was her honey money for the past month. She also saw, with equal distinctness, a big black pot half full of brownish liquid. She could even feel the tilt of the pot that would make the liquid pour out when she tipped it. She could see herself going through all the motions, even to the putting away of the kettle in the pot closet.

The house was dark in contrast to the sunny day outside; the black pot loomed darkly on the hearth. She deftly pinned her black skirt behind her, lifted the pot with experienced hand and carried the *casus belli* into the back shed, set it on the floor, ran for a pan and squatted down on her heels to tilt the pot. She took hold of the rim with a firm hand, and glanced up.

She was opposite the arched opening of the wood-shed. The garden was like a sunlit picture, as quiet as a Sunday. How pretty it was! The vines swayed slightly, they hung down like a garland through which the blue sky was seen.

"My," she thought, "but I never did see the balm so red and so full of blossoms, and do see them bees, they're as thick as spatters, the flowers fairly bend with 'em, they are so heavy. I guess we sha'n't want for honey this year. I shouldn't much wonder if we got honey enough to shingle the shed, it needs it. Do hear 'em hum, seems as ef the air was full o' wings and buzzin' and sweet smells. Who'd ever believe them busy things could sting so! I'd a sight ruther meet a bull any day than a bee ef it was mad. Now Sarah Emma is different by nature, she's jest like a bee herself, smooth as honey ef you don't rub her the wrong way, and she says that same thing about bees, 'Let 'em alone,'

says she, 'and they'll let you alone, rile 'em and they'll sting.' She don't never seem to rub 'em the wrong way and they don't never sting her. She certainly is a sister to bees. My! but wouldn't that make her mad ef I said so to her, and she so fond of 'em, too. I s'pose I've been a-rubbin' her the wrong way all the mornin', all 'long o' that ol' pot. I declare for't, I'm ashamed. I'll jest leave it stand for her to wash. I shouldn't never have seen it this way except for them bees. I dunno as they've never taught me to be busy, but they certainly have said something to me to-day. It does seem a pity to rile bees, jest for the sake of rilin' 'em, when you know fur certain they'll sting back every time. I dunno as I care who washes that pot, I don't believe I ever did care all along only Sarah Emma is so set. Wall! all I've got to say is that ef she is a bee, she's got to be treated as such."

And now setting the pot respectfully back on the hearth she went for the second time up over the hill, for the tea.

Sarah Emma had not been able to get away from Jane's as soon as she expected, so she came hurrying back through the orchard, the tablecloth held carefully before her for fear of mussing it, her eyes strained to catch sight of the door. When she saw Mary Ellen's back going up the road, wrath filled her soul, wrath all the greater

because she had expected this very thing. She ran through the garden and into the kitchen.

She would not look at the hearth where she expected *not* to see the kettle, till she had carefully laid the tablecloth on the dresser, then she turned with a rigid expectancy. There stood the kettle. She went to it and looked in—it had not been emptied! She looked around the room as if she expected something to happen, a sign from Heaven, some writing on the wall. Was the pot bewitched? Mary Ellen *must* have come back to empty it!

Finally with a long breath she said to the pot, "Well, I'm beat, nothing in all my life so queer as this has happened. What ever brung Mary Ellen back?"

She trembled as she emptied the pot, almost disappointed at her victory.

The Sewing Circle that afternoon was a great success. The minister's wife told about the women and their work all over the country. "Why! you will hardly believe it, but they study api-culture and get a living raising bees," she concluded, as a staggerer.

"That would suit you," said Mary Ellen to Sarah Emma. Then she turned to the minister's wife and said proudly, in spite of herself, "Sarah Emma has jest hived a swarm of bees this mornin' without a soul to help her; I'm dretful 'fraid of bees."

"You?" exclaimed the city woman, "you! why, you never could!"

"I dunno why I shouldn't," said Sarah Emma stitching on her gingham apron with vim.

"What! actually handle bees. Have you studied api-culture?"

"No, I ain't studied no culture about nothing; but I never could see why folks make such a fuss over bees. I should think that anybody with any gumption at all could handle a passel of bees and hive 'em, too, fur that matter. What's been a-puzzlin' me lately is how some folks learns to handle human critters. It seems to come by nature to some folks. I ain't any hand at it."

Sarah Emma glanced at Mary Ellen and the latter said with a proud toss of the head, "Sarah Emma is a master-hand at bees."

AN ANCESTRAL INVASION

DANIEL GRACE walked slowly down a street in Perth Amboy, scanning each house as he passed. He was trying to identify one that he had seen but once, and that some years before; he had a memory of it as a large, square house, with many windows in which were small greenish panes of glass.

When he came to a certain house, set a little farther back from the street than the others, he recognized it and walked up the straight path to the door and pulled the bell-handle; he heard the unmusical tinkle in the hall immediately behind the door, and it came into his memory that he had noticed that same jangle when he had been there before.

"Dear me," was his thought, "here it is ten years since we left the furniture stored here and we thought at the time that we should go to housekeeping the very next year!"

"Good morning." These words came from within through the crack of the door which had been quietly opened just wide enough to speak through. The hand that held the door open had a detached look, and the voice hardly

seemed to belong to any one, as the speaker stood back where she could not be seen.

Mr. Grace waited a moment and then, as the door remained almost closed, he said, "Good morning, can you tell me if Mrs. Gerrish is at home, Mrs. Thomas Gerrish?"

"Yes, she is."

There was no movement of invitation, no apparent intention of asking his errand, so he added, "I would like to speak with her please." Waiting for another embarrassed moment he added, "May I come in?"

The door was reluctantly opened and he thought that he recognized the woman who stood there as the one that he had come to see.

"You are Mrs. Gerrish, are you not? I am Mr. Grace."

The woman did not speak but led the way toward the room on the right of the hallway. If Daniel Grace had been left to himself he would have said that the family lived on the left side of the hall, and that he had rented the rooms on the right to store his furniture in, but the doors on both sides were open and evidently the family occupied the whole lower floor. He resented the idea that his furniture had been shifted without notification, for Daniel Grace was a very exact and methodical man.

The room that he was shown into was large

and sunny; it had a most friendly and attractive look; it was homelike, even to his critical and conservative taste; he had a memory of quite an opposite impression when he had been there before; then it had looked arid and poverty-stricken.

The woman excused herself for a moment, and as she left the room he was growingly sure that she was Mrs. Gerrish, the very one with whom he had made the arrangements about the storage ten years ago.

He heard a quiet, short conference with someone in the hall, and the outer door was shut carefully; he had a sudden fear that she had gone out.

As he waited for her to come back he went over in his mind the manner in which the furniture had been crated, boxed, barrelled, or burlapped, how each piece had been plainly stencilled with his name and business address, in a methodical way. There must have been enough furniture to fill two or three good-sized rooms, and on account of fire risk the stipulation had been made that the storerooms should be on the ground floor.

These people must have taken advantage of him and moved his belongings upstairs. A high-handed proceeding!

Now Daniel had not a sharply observing mind or rather his mind was not one for gathering rapid impressions. Given his own time he could

observe accurately, and he could reconstruct the past in detail and with exactitude.

He sat facing the window through which the sun shone with a dazzling brightness. This had a bewildering effect, but when Daniel's eyes had become accustomed to it, so that he could see plainly, he found himself face to face with a familiar sofa, and also face to face with an unbelievable fact.

The sofa looked at once familiar and unfamiliar, as a friend might look, seen under new and unexpected circumstances, especially if presented suddenly to the consciousness.

And sitting there, Daniel Grace had to accept with amazement the astonishing fact that he was sitting opposite to his own sofa—that intimate though inanimate friend of a lifetime. "*It is, it is our own sofa!*"

He took a grave and disapproving survey of the room. This inspection resulted in many revelations and identifications.

He was in a room completely furnished with his own belongings which he himself had crated and otherwise protected—his household goods or gods; to him they were gods, for all the pieces were ancestral, all had personal associations of an honourable kind.

To be a Grace was an honourable estate, and to belong to a Grace as near to honour as any thing inanimate could attain.

With his hands clutching the arms of his chair, literally his own chair, he made a survey of the room. He was sitting in a Grace chair opposite a Grace sofa, one that had been his mother's before she married. She had been a Tyndale, a name of equal distinction with Grace.

Over and behind the sofa hung an oval mirror which quite filled the space between two windows. He had known this mirror intimately since his childhood; its oval shape was to him quite unlike all other mirrors in the world. It was and always had been **THE MIRROR**, whose distinguished lot had been to reflect the Grace lineaments and to adorn the Grace wall.

Lying carelessly on the sofa was a guitar, delicate with the softly mellowed surface of an old and aristocratic instrument. He followed with his affronted eyes the familiar tracery of mother-of-pearl that outlined its form. This was the guitar that Mrs. Grace had played upon in her maiden days, it was the sacred instrument upon which she had tinkled the romantic music that had beguiled the hours of courtship on moonlight evenings. A guitar fragrant with memories of June and roses.

The sun fell full upon the instrument—it broadly emphasized the brash blue ribbon that had replaced the dim blue of his memory.

The Grace piano filled one space at the end of the room, and through the door he could see

into a dining room where the noble outlines of his own mahogany sideboard dominated, the sideboard that was brought over from England by his great-great-grandfather.

Daniel's eyes fell to the floor—he was inadequate to cope with these iniquitous discrepancies, this domesticating of the Grace furniture in this alien household. His tenderest memories were being desecrated and profaned.

His eyes, physically speaking, were fixed on the carpet, but mentally he was surveying the past and trying to penetrate into the future.

Suddenly his eyes awakened to the fact that they were tracing the pattern of the carpet; it was an old Grace carpet, rich and heavy in design, where roses mocked at art and nature. But they mocked not at Daniel; every thread in the carpet was sacred to him.

The wandering garlands of flowers had been trodden into gray uncertainty by the feet of strangers, there were sordid reminders of crossings and recrossings.

Daniel raised shocked eyes and saw, hung upon the wall, the family portraits. The frames were tarnished but forever dignified by the enclosed portraits.

There were Jonathan and his wife—the maternal grandparents. There was Governor Grace—his grandfather, and hanging next to him was he himself as a small boy in a white

suit, posed before a parted blue drapery which revealed a landscape in the distance. On another wall hung the beautiful portraits of his two aunts, Eleanor and Marianna.

It was with actual physical misery that he dully surveyed this annexation of the Grace ancestors; he wiped his face with his cambric handkerchief; he felt as if he were trying to waken himself from a terrifying dream.

He tried to formulate an adequate protest to make to this Mrs. Gerrish. Would she ever come back? Had she gone out to avoid him? He stared at the bookcase full of familiar books, and then he heard her come back into the room. He turned to confront her.

She sat down in a Grace chair, and adjusted her dress with a certain formality, and with the manner of one who came to an encounter not unprepared, and yet with a baffling sort of inertia that had the quality of a barrier.

The silence was so long that at last he broke it almost violently. He tried not to see his familiars, the chairs and pictures, they embarrassed him, but instead of the arraignment he had composed, he heard himself say, with the formal politeness of a Grace at his best, "I hope that I shall not embarrass you but I have come to see about the furniture that I stored with you some ten years ago."

"Yes." That was all the response that she

gave. It was hardly complete, considering the circumstances, but the woman added no other word.

"I see," he now said with forced courage, determined to face the situation and to accuse her directly of fraud, or at any rate of violation of her contract, "I see"—he hesitated, then substituted something quite other from his originally intended sentence, "I see that you occupy both sides of the house." This was inane, and not likely to advance him on his difficult way.

"Yes," she assented, and silence fell again. Now fully recognizing his inadequacy he determined to drop all discussion and merely to give notice of the removal of his furniture.

"I think, if it is perfectly convenient to you, Mrs. Gerrish, that I will have the furniture"—he had almost said boxed, but thought better of it and said "removed." He felt that according to all ethical standards it really *was* boxed as he had left it. Then he reiterated fatuously, "At your convenience, of course."

"When should you think of sending for it?"

"I will send for it day after to-morrow," he said, resolutely.

"I am afraid that I could not be ready by then." Mrs. Gerrish said this quite as if she had taken him at his word and would let his convenience wait upon her own.

This stiffened him up; he could feel the blood

beating in his temples, but instead of saying as he knew that he ought to, "I really must insist upon having it at once," he sat in uncomfortable silence. Mrs. Gerrish also was silent; he could hear the firm ticking of his grandmother's clock where it stood at the foot of the stairs measuring off time in its impersonal manner. The sound drove him to speech: "When will it be convenient for you to have the furniture removed?"

She thought for a moment and then said, "My daughter Luella is to be married in two weeks, on the second of June."

"This is certainly very extraordinary!" ejaculated Daniel.

"My daughter is not very strong and I should be sorry to have confusion in the house at this time."

She spoke very quietly but Daniel felt that she meant every word to tell upon him.

He thought for a moment, then his irritation swept him into saying abruptly, "I am afraid that I cannot wait."

"Luella has gone out for a few minutes, she may come in at any time, I should be sorry to have her know about the furniture," said Mrs. Gerrish.

"Do you mean sorry to have her know that I am going to take my own furniture from your house?"

"No, sorry to have her know that it does not belong to us."

"You do not mean, Madam, it is not possible that your daughter thinks that you own all this!" He gave a sweep with his arm that seemed in its dignity to embrace and gather together, to rescue once for all these matchless Grace belongings.

"Luella has always liked these things better than all the others; she has been brought up to dust and to take care of them, and to see that they were all in order."

Good heavens, what could he say! Just then the front door opened and closed. Mrs. Gerrish and Daniel looked at each other, almost furtively. He had a bewildered feeling that he was in a conspiracy to keep Luella in ignorance of his true reason for coming to the house, that, in short, preposterous as it was, he was to help in the fraud, to forswear for a time his ownership, to enter into this combination against himself.

Luella was a slender young thing and she slipped into the room, not shyly but as noiselessly as a breath of air. She looked too young and too unaware to be married, and much too young and innocent to be a part to her mother's deceit.

Her mother took her by the hand and said, "This is Luella, Mr. Grace."

The manner of the introduction seemed, in some indefinable way, to put Luella into his keeping, to bespeak for her his consideration, to emphasize her youth, her innocence, to make of her a potential lamb to a possible sacrifice.

"Luella," said her mother, "run and put on a thinner dress."

"The white one?" This was a scarcely audible question, hardly more than the moving of the lips, but Daniel heard it like a keen, thin sound penetrating the fog of his bewilderment.

Then Luella went out and he straightened himself, to him this was his last opportunity of putting matters right, and probably Mrs. Gerrish had sent her away on purpose that they might have a last word.

Not a movement on her part; he looked at her, she sat quietly there without the slightest revealing expression; she just waited for Luella to come back. Her face was of a pale plumpness, impassive, inscrutable.

She rose, after a moment, and slightly lowered the window-shades. Tempering the light made a unity of the room, and the portraits came into more prominence as the frames reflected less light. The faces seemed to glow from the canvas, they might well be going to take part in this drama.

Luella came in again with that half-sliding, half-inquiring motion which seemed a part of her

individuality; she was arrested by her mother's voice just as she stood in front of the portrait of Daniel's Aunt Marianna Grace.

Daniel was struck by the singular sense of arrested motion expressed in Luella's figure; he glanced at Mrs. Gerrish, feeling that in some way she was not only directing Luella's movements but also that she in a sense controlled his own observation. He felt that his eyes were being directed by some compelling force to look first at his Aunt Marianna's portrait, and then at the younger, appealing face of Luella; then he was suddenly struck with the strong suggestion of likeness between the two.

He was shocked to admit this even to himself, and he knew that the only thing to do now was to cut the unpleasant interview short off, and to go away, sending someone else, less intimately connected with the transaction, to recover the goods, move them, and put an end to this disgraceful predicament.

But he frustrated his own design by lingering and saying against his own volition, "What a curious resemblance there is between your daughter and the portrait above her."

Luella smiled at her mother and then glancing fondly at the portrait said, "That is a portrait of my favourite aunt. She isn't living you know, but I have always loved her better than all the others." Luella in her diminutive way re-

peated his own sweep of the arm and gathered to herself this whole sheaf of Grace ancestors. Then she sat down on the well-remembered Grace footstool, directly under the portrait.

It was extraordinary to see the child of Mrs. Gerrish sitting with her young and happy face under the ancestral Marianna, challenging his recognition of, and acquiescence in, the fact that there was a strong likeness. She evidently expected from him a sympathetic pleasure.

He felt dizzy, he was being ridiculously led into acts contrary to his intentions; he wanted to protest, he wanted also to find out how much Luella was a free agent or the dupe of that impossible, preposterous imposter, her mother.

Then Luella with a little excitement in her voice took the lead. "I know I look like my aunt, everybody says so. I made this dress myself just like hers in the picture, don't you see?"

Daniel did see, and admitted it with a nod, all the while wondering if, after all, it was not the dress that made Luella look like Aunt Marianna. He regretted that even his nod of admission had still further entangled him in the fantastic web of circumstance that was being woven around him, and was Luella in it? or only another victim!

"You see," she went on, folding her slender hands in evident security of his interest, and

yet with a little glance of dependence at her mother, "you see my Aunt Cecilia died when I was very young, she never saw me but I was named after her. Cecilia is my middle name. She left me her portrait; she was only twenty-seven when she died, and she left me all her things: her portrait and her books and the sofa and the piano, and even her guitar. I have her old music pieces, too, and I have learned to play on her guitar. I wrote a little song about her; I sing it to her sometimes when I sit here. She used to sing, too."

"I had an aunt also, who died young." Daniel announced this stiffly in a sort of antagonistic competition.

"Tell me about her," pleaded Luella with ready and sweet sympathy.

It would not do to relinquish his beautiful Aunt Marianna into the hands of the Gerrishes, so he added, "My Aunt Marianna was very beautiful and lovely, she"—he hesitated—"she, too, died young, before she was thirty." He spoke with difficulty as if his features were stiff; his speech was mechanical and his lips immobile. Luella leaned forward, clasping her hands more tightly together. "Tell me more."

Here was a new trouble—his Aunt Marianna had died of a broken heart, so the family romance ran, a tale entirely of sweet obedience to parental authority, the renouncing of an

unworthy lover, an early death, a bier of lilies, and fragrant, pathetic memories. This was not a tale to tell this strange young girl who claimed this very aunt for her own, as she sat under the portrait, and who herself was to be married so soon. It was still more of an outrage to think of revealing sacred Grace memories to these strange people, but nevertheless he said briefly, "She had an unhappy love affair; she never recovered from the grief of it." Thus shamelessly did the correct Daniel betray the Grace history.

"Did she die of a broken heart? Oh! how sad, how very sad. I did not know that any one ever did really die of a broken heart, I thought it happened only in books! Mother, you don't suppose that Aunt Cecilia died of a broken heart. I never knew how she died; you don't suppose she did!"

No human being with a trace of a heart could turn and say to her, "Luella, you never had an Aunt Cecilia, or, if you did have one, this is not a portrait of her. This is the portrait of my own Aunt Marianna Grace; it is only by chance that you look like her. I am going to take the portrait away. She isn't yours. It is all a mistake—or worse. She is *my* aunt, not yours." If he could not say this what was to be done!

He rose suddenly and looking at his watch

he said he must defer business till another day as he must hurry to catch a train.

Luella laid her hand confidently in his at parting, and Mrs. Gerrish followed him to the door, and as he went out he heard her say, in colourless, low tones, "You can have the furniture moved on the tenth of June."

He always afterward remembered this woman as large, with a white, impassive face showing as an opaque blur, framed in the partly open door, and he could hear the low, even words, "You can have the furniture moved on the tenth of June."

Daniel had no keen sense of humour, but he laughed derisively at himself as he went down the street. To have been so befuddled and bamboozled by that pasty-faced woman, not only to be kept waiting for his furniture now, but to have had it used so many years, to have no explanation, no apology! To have been drawn into a conspiracy, to have been forced to lend the Grace furniture for a wedding, to have allowed that young girl to rob him of his aunt, to have even seemed to have countenanced this disgusting fraud! Good Heavens! It was incredible!

On June tenth Daniel went to Perth Amboy. He had regained a certain amount of firmness and had matured a scheme for at least getting at the reasons for the desecration of his property,

and also for finding out how much Luella really knew. In his heart of hearts he wanted to exonerate her from all complicity.

The house in Amboy had its shades down, there did not seem to be any one there; there was that indescribable air of aloneness that marks an unoccupied house. A neighbour was evidently on the watch for him and came running over with the keys in her hand; she opened the front door. He saw that the house had been dismantled, the rooms at the right were full of furniture, crated, barrelled, boxed, and burlapped. Each bundle was stencilled with his name and address, exactly as he remembered leaving it ten years before.

The neighbour was saying, "Mrs. Gerrish left yesterday. Luella was married on the second of June; she told me to tell you that she looked exactly like her aunt, the one she was named after. She did look like the picture, but to my thinking she would have looked prettier in a more modern dress. She always was just daft over that aunt of hers."

"Did Mrs. Gerrish tell you what was to be done with the furniture?"

"No, she said you would understand and to tell you that she was much obliged to you, she said that you knew all about it, that was all; she never was one for many words."

"Did she leave her address with you?"

"Why, no, don't you know where the furniture is to go?"

"Yes, I know where it belongs, if it is to be sent where it was originally intended to go. I certainly ought to know, if anybody does." This was the last feeble protest made to himself, for the neighbour apparently was only a messenger as ignorant of the Gerrishes as he himself was.

"Are you any relation of the Gerrishes?" the neighbour inquired curiously.

"No," he said, "*I am not in the remotest degree related to them*," then he added, "I am—I happen to be, in this matter, the agent of Mrs. Gerrish."

"My! ain't he stiff!" said she as she went away and left him alone with his recovered ancestors.

THE UNDOING OF THE BURGLAR

MRS. CLARA G. BROWN is a widow. She believes in clubs, in alliances, and in reciprocity days. She gives much time and thought to these activities, and she was the originator of the saying—"Show me a woman and I will tell you whether she belongs to a club or not." Sometimes she varies this by saying, "Show me a club and I will tell you what sort of woman belongs to it." This last aphorism occurred to her when bridge-whist clubs came, and came to stay. They had to be accounted for.

Impressions drifted into and out of Mrs. Brown's mind as do ships into and out of a harbour—leaving no trace. Intellectual tides had washed her through Orientalism, Esoteric Buddhism, Theosophy, and Transcendentalism, into the safely modernized generalization that mind is master of all matters, great and small.

She says—"I am broad, I have no fads. My only children, alas! are the children of my brain."

She is the personification of Modern Woman, but she still has one weakness, one obsession, one miserable fibre of femininity. Clara is afraid

of burglars. In vain has she tried to eradicate this fear, in vain has she followed the recipe of one cult after another; she cannot exorcise this humiliating thought. She remains in abject fear of burglars. Small, creeping things, like spiders and rodents, she has been able utterly to abolish from the corner of her mind where fear generates; but the burglar terror, vivid and tormenting, always recurs at bedtime.

She lives alone in her pleasant suburban house, with one competent maid who does the cooking, waits on the table and the door, and at odd moments buttons and hooks Mrs. Brown into her well-fitting waists. To be well-dressed is a creed of Mrs. Brown's. She is a socialist, just now, and is willing to reciprocate in all ways; she would gladly do up the waist worn by her maid, only in the nature of things the maid would never think of asking her to do this. Really, the mutual duties of socialism easily adjust themselves, because the foot-rule of custom is still in the memory as a standard.

Mrs. Clara Brown always begins the rites of retiring for the night by being unhooked by the maid, whom she then dismisses with the injunction to lock all the doors and to put a stick over the hall window, for a clever burglar could perhaps introduce a thin-bladed knife through the crack of that particular window and press back the catch.

After the maid goes, Mrs. Brown takes a candle and looks under the bed. She is a trifle plump, not aggressively so, but the act of stooping requires consideration.

One night, two weeks ago, she lifted the valance of the bed and peered underneath. She saw no burglar, but away back she did see a small object. It might possibly be a glove, or a pair of stockings that had slipped from the bed on the far side. It was quite small and obscure in the candlelight. Her fear of seeing a burglar being allayed, there came in its place an irritation at the maid's carelessness. It was sweeping day, and no corner should have been overlooked.

She tried to reach the object and couldn't. Then she got her hair-brush and tried to poke it out, but it was still out of reach; so she gave it up and framed, in her mind, a proper rebuke for the maid. She needed watching evidently.

She forgot to reprove the maid next morning, for she went off early to town. At the club there was to be a lecture by a learned Oriental—a Pundit of Pundits, who was to speak on the "Visualization of the Invisible." Afterward a luncheon in his honour was to be given. Mrs. Brown determined to eat no meat on this occasion, out of respect for the Pundit's religion; but she was much perplexed to observe that he partook liberally of all the good things, includ-

ing meat. She made a pencil memorandum in her gold-trimmed notebook, in her usual orderly manner, to this effect: "Ask Pundit to explain theory of vegetarianism after lunch."

That evening a friend went home with her to spend the night; a Mrs. Parkinson, of Hackensack, who was a delegate to the Federation of Clubs. They talked late, and Clara was so tired she actually forgot to look under the bed, and promptly fell asleep.

About midnight she awoke with a start. She was sure that she heard a stealthy tread. She lay awake, shivering, with her eyes wide open, but after a time she got hold of an antidotal thought, a thought to banish fear, and finally went to sleep with that in her mind, like a mental lozenge. She slept well, and in the morning she told her friend of the occurrence and gave her the formula for abolishing fear. She felt that she had at last "demonstrated" with perfect success.

But the next night the burglar idea came back upon her with appalling strength. It took all her courage to look under the bed at all. There was no burglar there, but away, way back against the wall lay not only the small object she had seen before, but also something bigger: something that might be a fur boa or a scarf, or even a small shawl. This seriously annoyed her; it kept her awake for a long time, during

which she thought out a project for the more vigorous education of maids. She planned a lecture to be given at the clubs with illustrations. Also, through the agency of the clubs, there was to be circulated through the kitchens of the land a collection of photographs of the best Greek art. She believed that a daily, yes, an hourly influence would emanate from these, in which the use of the straight and the curved line is so splendidly manifest.

She fell asleep with this uplift idea in her mind. She called the lecture "The Minds of Maids, or Order Through Art." The next day she talked seriously with her maid and sent her to pick up the things that had fallen under the bed. The maid came back and said she could find nothing under the bed, but she thought perhaps the bed-clothes had slipped back and made a little heap. She had straightened them out and now they were all properly tucked in.

Mrs. Clara Brown was not convinced. That night, moreover, there was an even bigger heap of something back in the dark. A fur coat or a big ulster would look like that. She took a broom and poked at it but she couldn't get it out. She sat on the floor and wondered if her nerves were giving way with all her club work and this burglar fear. She was ashamed to call the maid, and she then and there determined to take a vacation just as soon as the club year

was ended. Next day, however, she recovered her nerve, or a portion of it. Curiously enough, it was no longer apprehension of seeing a burglar that agitated her, but the dread of seeing more things slipped down behind the bed. She certainly did need a change!

That night she held the candle well away from her; for, having a frugal mind, she remembered that she had on her second-best, black-silk skirt. She slowly bent her plump person, threw the valance back, and looked.

There was the burglar!

There he was, one sinister eye fastened upon her, after the manner of burglars, one hand stretched out toward her, and in its grasp was a shining pistol, its gaping muzzle pointing straight at her.

She sank slowly to the floor. She seemed paralyzed; she could not call out, she could not rise, she could not seize the dinnerbell that always stood on the table by her bed for the very purpose of alarming the neighbours. All her plans were as naught in the stupendous presence of the burglar.

"Good evening," said he.

"Good evening," returned Mrs. Brown, mechanically, while the cold chills ran up and down her back. Then, as if wakened by her own voice, she tried to get up; but the burglar said quietly (you must remember that he had a pistol in his

hand loaded and cocked): "Don't move, and don't be frightened; I am not going to hurt you if you keep still."

Oh, the awful threat that lay behind those words, the exact words she had heard a hundred times in imagination, the very words that burglars always use to hypnotize their victims before shooting, or tying them up with cords and putting gags in their mouths so they can't scream.

"In fact," continued the burglar, "I can't get out of here."

"Mercy!" ejaculated she. "Are you hurt?"

"No, I am not exactly hurt," said he, "but I am unfinished."

"What do you *mean* by unfinished, and who *are* you?"

"My name," said he, "is C. C.— Mr. Carking Care."

"What a name!" she exclaimed. "I don't believe it is your name at all, it doesn't sound like a real name."

"It's all the name I've got!" Then he added wistfully: "At present, anyway."

Mrs. Brown sat silently gazing at him. The candle was tipped and the drip, drip of the wax was making stalagmites in her broad and shining silk lap.

Then he went on, "I am incomplete as yet, and it is only this incompleteness that saves

you; I am, to use the watchmaker's phrase, not fully assembled yet."

"I don't understand you," said she, much puzzled, thinking the man must be insane.

"Why," said he, "*you made me!* You said that a burglar was your carking care; you often said so, you kept repeating it, and it is lucky for you that I am not yet complete. I have developed this far, and in a few days, maybe tomorrow, I should have been a full-blown burglar. Of course I never should have been a first-class burglar, because your mind is so faulty. Now see," said he with an expression of disgust, "just see this darned pistol! It is simply ridiculous. Just such a pistol as you would expect a woman to make! No gunsmith in the world would be willing to put his trade-mark on it! It is all barrel and trigger and about twice as long, and as thick again, as it should be, and much too shiny; why, it is perfectly absurd!" He gave it a contemptuous jerk.

Mrs. Brown gave a start and a little scream.

"Pooh!" said he; and then went on: "And just look at me!" The command was entirely unnecessary for she was looking at him intently. "Yes, just look at me! Only one eye; you never *would* see but one eye in your imagination—one eye, one black eye, sinister enough for a dozen. Don't you know that some burglars have light blue eyes as pleasant and innocent as a baby's?

And there are lots of other things that you have left out entirely, or got wrong. Just see how flat I am! You would have rounded me out after a while, of course; but you never in the world would have made a good job of me. I am pretty much all eye, overcoat, and pistol!"

He did look flat, she could see that herself, now that she was calmer. His voice was disagreeable and fault-finding.

"Well, anyway, here I am! You have got me so far, and what are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" she echoed.

"Yes, do about *me*. I am still growing, and I am bound to keep on growing or shrinking. It all depends upon you."

"Can't you go away?" she suggested.

"Go away? No, I can't! Where could I go to, I should like to know—in this semi-assembled condition!"

"What can I do about it?" asked she.

"Why, disseminate me; disembody me! I must be dissipated."

"Dissipated! Mercy!" she cried. She had an abhorrent vision of drinking and carousing right there in her own house.

"Yes, if you don't want a full-blown burglar in your house, you'd better get rid of me, the quicker the better. Now you stop looking under the bed at night, and go about your business, saying to yourself all the time: 'There

is no burglar under the bed; there is no such thing as a burglar. I dispel the error; I rid myself of the burglar thought.'

"This is what you must keep saying every time your mind sets toward the burglar idea. You must demonstrate for courage and truth.

"You must do this for ten days, three hours a day. It has taken you about ten days to assemble me, and of course this life-long fear of burglars has tended to make me particularly robust, unusually so. Very likely the pistol idea in your mind will be the hardest to eliminate. If that remains, you must give yourself a special treatment for it.

"And during all this time you must not look under the bed once. If you do, you will add just so much to my permanence and my persistence."

"But don't you see, I can't bear to think of you under the bed all this time, while I am treating for you."

"You can't think of me as being under the bed if you don't think of me at all, can you?"

He said this quite rudely, and continued: "What I'm trying to make you understand is, that you mustn't think of me at all, *not once*. And if you follow my instructions exactly, I ought to be flattened out of existence in about ten days or so; say twelve days to be sure that there isn't a trace of me remaining."

"I will try," said Mrs. Brown, meekly.

"Then you'd better begin at once. Now say after me: 'There is no such thing as a burglar.'"

Mrs. Brown said it.

"Oh, you've got to do it with more spirit than that! Say it this way," he ordered in a dictatorial tone.

Mrs. Brown tried it again.

"That's better, now say it over once more."

She repeated it, this time with emphasis and spirit.

"That will do. Now say these things after me: 'The burglar idea is an error; I banish error from my mind. I banish fear from my mind; I have no fear. I am mistress of my own mind.'"

Mrs. Clara G. Brown, with the candle dripping wax puddles in the lap of her next-best, black-silk skirt, her eyes fixed on the one eye of the burglar she had made, repeated these phrases after him in a firm, vigorous voice.

"Now," said Carking Care, "remember! For ten days, three hours a day, you must repeat these words, and you'd better take an extra treatment every other day for the pistol. If you are resolute, you will entirely disembody me by that time; and you bet I shall be glad enough to be out of it; I hate a botch, and I shouldn't be proud of my mind's work, if I were you. You made a perfectly ridiculous mess of me."

Mrs. Brown dropped the valance and hid her burglar from sight, then carefully shutting the

door, she went into another room to sleep, all the while repeating: "I have no fear, there is no such thing as a burglar."

At the end of ten days she believed him to be disseminated, but she didn't dare look under the bed. She was thin. She had lost ten pounds. She packed her trunk and folded her best black silk to the formula: "There is no such——," etc., etc., etc.

Even at the moment of departure she didn't dare to tell the maid to put the stick over the hall window. "Who knows what I might nucleate if I should say anything!" she reflected. She even stopped herself when she thought that she was going to *think* of the fear thought.

She reached Detroit at ten o'clock in the evening; and after a night's rest she felt more like herself again.

At the breakfast table a telegram was handed to her. She opened it carelessly, but read with amazement: "Last night a burglar broke into your house by the hall window and stole everything he could carry off."

Poor Clara G. Brown says she hasn't yet decided what to do. In view of all the facts it does not seem to be of any use to repeat the formula against burglars, because she feels perfectly sure that the thing under her bed wasn't the one who afterward came in by the window. She even wonders if they looked at all alike.

SABRINY, DAD & CO.

PART ONE

YES, that's right so fur as it goes; out of wood it is, but the burnin' question is, what kind o' wood. You see, little gal, there's wood and wood. And so now, ef it is agreeable to my pardner, we'll just knock off work fur a spell and have a business meetin' to consider what kind o' wood is most suitablest, all things considerin', fur this 'ere chist.

"I'll jest sort o' stiddy my head with a dror at my pipe while I set the question fairly before ye.

"Now, speakin' o' woods, there's gopher wood, that's a kind o' scripter wood and no mistake; but we don't seem to have no great supply of that particular kind o' timber on hand, not jest at present, that is. Therefore we'll pass on to cedar of Lebanon; that's scripter wood, too, and it always sounded to me, Sabriny, as ef cedar of Lebanon would hev a sweet sort of smell to it, like spice; now gopher wood, as I study on it, don't seem as ef it would hev no sweet smell,

but it would hev a nice dark colour to it. I should ev preferred, myself, to hev had cedar o' Lebanon on account o' the sweet smell, but it so happens that we ain't got no supply o' that on hand neither—we're jest about out o' that kind, leastwise there ain't enough to make a chist out of. Can my pardner think of any other sort of wood that would be suitable fur the work we hev in hand?"

"Dad, how would pine do?"

"Shucks! Why, pine, of course, the very thing for this chist; and it happens that we hev got some pine, jest as dry as bone and exactly the right length. Now jest see the advantage of hevin' a pardner!"

"Shouldn't you have thought of pine, Dad?"

"I might, and then again I mightn't. Of course I should hev come to it in time, but beginnin' way back in the Bible fur the different kinds of wood it stands to reason that I shouldn't hev got round to pine till we'd wasted lots of time on the road. And now here we be, jest by one word spoke by my pardner. We've got some pine fur sure, and betwixt ourselves *and* the Co. it's pine or nothin' this time. Shall we call it pine?"

"Let's make it of pine this time."

"Pine it is then, and now, Sabriny, you know that this chist is to be the best chist that ever was made. No king couldn't hev no better

chist than this one that we're makin' at this very minute as ever was."

"Couldn't a king have a *gold* chist, Dad?"

"Cert'in, *cert'in* he could, ef he hed a min' to; but the question *is*, would he like it, all things considered. Now on a cold mornin' in March or mebbly in January, with the snow a-squeakin' under foot, would he like to git up early in the mornin' and leave his warm bed, to open the chist to git a plane or a dror-shave out, so as to ease up the queen's door ef it had happened to hev sagged a mite so's 't it wouldn't stay shet? Would he like to lay a-holt on a freezin' cold gold chist and mebbly hev to fumble round to git the key into the lock till his fingers got so numb thet he couldn't git the chist open, let alone handlin' the dror-shave? No, even a king would git riled at thet, I do believe. I kind o' think, all things considered, thet a pine chist is the best, even fur a king.

"So here goes! You best jest squint your eye along this 'ere piece of pine, pardner, to see ef it is a good piece for a starter."

"I think it is a splendid piece, Dad."

"All right then, now! One to begin, two to show, three to make ready, and four to go. I believe this day was jest made for Sabriny, Dad and Co., the rain sort of shets us in and shets other folks out."

"Ma, for instance?"

"Now, Sabriny, it isn't fur me to say I meant Ma, but it cert'inly *is* considerable damp fur her to come out here to the shop. Now I don't say she won't come, and I ain't sayin' that Sabriny, Dad and Co., don't *want* her to come; what I do say is, thet this 'ere rain is goin' to do the crops considerable good, and I'm not sayin' but what I am willin' to see it keep on a-rainin' this way all day long."

"Oh! Dad, what beautiful curls you are makin', I wisht my hair curled like them shavin's, all round my head."

"Sho, Sabriny! I don't wish no sech a thing. I don't believe I could work with no sech a curly-headed pardner round the shop, nohow. It would upset me dreadful. You see, when I selected a pardner it was as much as anything else because she hadn't no curls flyin' round loose and gittin' mixed up with the shavin's. You hev to be mighty sober and particular to be a pardner in a firm like oun!"

"Dad, how do you stick the corners of the chest together?"

"We don't exactly stick 'em together, we jines 'em, and what Sabriny, Dad and Co. jines together no man can put asunder; they'll be jined as firm as them that enters holy matrimony. It's cling or bust, and you can't bust."

"What can't bust, Dad?"

"The corners of the chist, to be sure. As I

was sayin', a chist is mighty like holy matrimony. It may be chuck full of edged tools, but it won't separate, not ef it's made by one of these three—Sabriny, Dad and Co. Well, I declare! Ef I ain't jest about got these 'ere pieces ready to jine."

"I thought a chist was a square box, Dad. What makes you make it that shape, bigger at the top?"

"This 'ere chist is peculiar, it's an invention of your ole Dad's. You jest watch, now, and see him cut out these 'ere two little half-moons. Look out, Sabriny! Don't never tech a dror-shave; thet tool's sharper than all creation. Don't you never play with edged tools. As the Bible says, use 'em but don't never play with 'em. I swan to man, ef thet ain't the dinner bell a'ready and Ma hollerin' fur Sabriny! I calculate somebody'll hev to go in purty quick so's to pacify Ma. I guess it hed better be me, because it stands to reason thet ef it is too rainy fur Ma to come out here, it is too rainy fur Sabriny to go in, to say nothin' at all about her ever gittin' out again. So ef the heft of the firm will stay right out here in the shop, and mebbby jest curl down with her doll on them shavin's her Dad'll fetch her out a piece o' pie or sumthin' or other; that is, ef Ma's willin'. Mind, he don't promise nothin' fur cert'in, only jest mebbby."

* * * * *

"Wal, I do declare for't, ef she ain't jest fell fast asleep with them 'ere shavin's pinned to her head fur curls! What cur'us things little gals is, anyway; I 'most wish they wouldn't never grow up. I guess I'll hev to flax round and git that peculiar chist of ourn done afore she wakes up. I do reely suppose I'd orter hev set thet light o' glass into the butt'ry winder by all rights, and mebby it would ev been peace-fuller all 'round ef I hed a-done it. But this 'ere chist has got holt on me and I guess I'll jest let the butt'ry winder and Ma slide fur onct. As we useter say when we was children, 'Scoldin' don't hurt none, lickin' don't last long, and kill me she dasn't!"

"Awake, are you, little gal? Well, there's your pie; you jest eat it like a nice little gal and then come over here and see the chist. It's 'most finished a'ready. There!"

"Why, Dad! It's a cradle; it's a doll's cradle!"

"Land o' Goshen! so it is, it's jest an ordinary doll's cradle, rockers and all!. Who'd 'a' thought it! And here your old Dad's been figgerin' on its turnin' out to be a tool chist, all the time he's been a-tinkerin' on it. That's a good one on the ole man, and the very first day, too, thet he's worked fur Sabriny, Dad and Co. Keerless ole Dad!"

PART TWO

More particularly about the Co.

"Wal, I do declare! Ef that don't take me back ten years an' more, to see you, Sabriny, a-settin' there on the end of that 'ere bench, fur all the world jest as you did that rainy day when your old Dad made that peculiar chist that turned out to be a cradle, jest an ordinary doll's cradle. Seems to me that you're too fine to be a-settin' on the bench with all them folderols a-bubblin' and a-bilin' over the end o' the bench fur all the world like geese's feathers a-comin' out of a piller-slip. Come to look at ye, ye be, and again ye ben't, the same little gal that wore the checkered apron; but you've got the same eyes, Sabriny, jest the same eyes the little gal had, that Dad made the cradle for."

"This is my graduating dress, Dad. You'll come over to the Academy and see me graduate, won't you, Dad?"

"Wal, I dunno. You look as pretty as a clove pink, but I dunno as I want to see a hull garding full o' pinks! I guess jest one pink is enough fur Dad."

"Dad, what is that you're making?"

"Not a tool chist this time; it's only a hen-coop fur the old speckle. The tarnation ole thing has gone and stole her nest ag'in, and come

out unbeknownst to me with a hull brood of little chicks, and now she's a-tuin' round, oneasy like, coz there ain't no coop waitin' handy for her to move into. As ef coops came by nature as chicks do!"

"I wish it was a chest that you were making, Dad, and that it *was* wider at the top, and that when it was done it would turn out to be a coffin."

"A coffin! Why, Sabriny! You mean a cradle, don't ye?"

"No, Dad, not a cradle. I ain't a child any more, I wish it was a coffin."

"Sho! A coffin? What a notion that is, to be sure, to git into Sabriny's head unbidden, as it were. Why! You don't need no coffin no more than nothin' at all. You ain't a-goin' to be dead, and ef you was you wouldn't take no kind of comfort in it! What folks reely enjoy about bein' dead is thinkin' about it. When it comes to the real thing, as I figger on it, it 'ud be an empty sort of privilege. Wishin' they was dead is the very breath of life to some folks."

"I do, Dad, I wish that I was dead. I'm sick and tired of living and everything else."

"Now that seems cur'us to your dad, you jest a-graduat' and mebbly with a prospect of a school of your own some time, and now you're a-wishin' you was dead. Why, Sabriny, when you was a little gal you was always a-wishin' that you hed curls, and nothin' would do but

you must pin shavin's onto your head and pretend that they was curls; you fell asleep onct with them shavin' curls pinned on. And then you wanted a cradle, and I made that fur you, and now you think that you want a coffin. Dear me suz, wantin' a coffin! Now you jest tell your ole good-fur-nothin' Dad all about it—don't cry. Sabriny, I wouldn't cry ef I was you, I mean cry away ef it eases you any, it won't hurt nothin'. And here's my bandanner, the one you giv me at Christmas, that time you earned the money pickin' berries and saved it up fur the handkerchief. Here, you just tuck it under your chin so as not to spile them fine close. There! I ain't a-lookin' at ye, cry away! I've locked the door so's't the folks can't come in. And mebby bimeby you kin tell it all to Sabriny, Dad and Co., confidential like, and p'raps you'll find that you don't need no coffin after all, only jest Dad's ole ear.

"Sabriny, did you ever think how many folks there is a-livin' on this earth this very minute? And I guess ef the hull truth was known most every one on 'em that drors the breath of life drors in some sorrow with it. They jest hev to grapple with it, unbeknownst to everyone else; and mebby the next one right alongside of 'em don't never know nothin' about it. Is it your studies that bothers you, Sabriny? Algebry, mebby?"

"Not altogether algebra, Dad; you see, Dad, when the new teacher came last fall he took a great interest in my studying algebra. He said I had a good mind, and as there wasn't anybody else to go into advanced mathematics he made a class just for me, and I have done splendid work, he says so himself."

"Sho, you don't say so! Wal?"

"And then last term Squire Jones's daughter she took a notion to study French—French of all things—and she don't know how to speak English hardly. And then he went and made a class in French, just for her, and she calls herself a 'special' and comes teetering in at eleven o'clock, and has a half-hour lesson all by herself——"

"Now go slow, Sabriny, you jest go slow so's't I kin follow. She comes in and I s'pose that she gits so much French mebbby that it kinder interferes with your gittin' enough algebray; there ain't enough left over for you, so to speak."

"No, Dad, of course that isn't it. Of course I can learn all I have a mind to, though he *did* change my hour just to suit her."

"Then mebbby—now mind I'm only s'posin'—mebbby there ain't quite enough teacher to go round fur both on ye; is that it?"

"Oh, Dad! how can he like that silly little thing, she giggles all the time and her hair is frizzled all over her head till it looks like a

hurrah's nest, and she sits and gets red like a baby when he speaks to her. I declare it makes me fairly mad to see the way she goes on; and now he's going away and—and——"

"Sh-sh-sh. There, don't cry—only jest enough to make you comfortable. I've got a cold in the head, myself, it bothers me dreadful when I go to speak! And now, Sabriny, I want to tell you somethin', it's a little story about your Aunt Lize. She's a pretty comfortable old body now, like your Dad; but when she was about eighteen—why, you're jest eighteen, too, Sabriny, that is you'll be eighteen come June. Now don't things come round sort o' cur'us!—wal, when your Aunt Lize was jest eighteen a new teacher he come to town. He was a spry young feller, and he was only teachin' till he got a call to preach. There was a sort of revival of religion in our town when it was found out how this young man attended all the meetin's, among the young folks especially. Lize she took to goin' to all the meetin's jest like all the other girls, and the young feller, that is the teacher, he used more often than not to see her home with another girl that lived up her way. Your Aunt Lize had always been dreadful easy-tempered up to this time, jest like a lamb to live with; you wouldn't ever have supposed that she and your Ma were of the same family, not of course but what your Ma's temper is all

right, only it isn't jest the same kind as your Aunt Lize's. But now all of a sudden Lize turned sort of snappish, and she cried dretful easy ef anything crossed her, and she seemed to have a turrible time with her religion, till it almost seemed as ef there wa'n't no living with her, and then all at once she cleared up like a May mornin'; and bimeby it come out that she was goin' to marry the preacher, and so her troubles ended. I don't know 'zactly what all this has to do with yourn about your algebray, only it sort of popped into your old Dad's head; and now I guess you hed orter be a goin' over to the Academy. I thought I seen the teacher and a lot of folks a-goin' by, some time ago."

"Here's your bandanna, Dad. It ain't so very wet, but I'll hang it on this peg to dry, and I want you to know, Dad, that there ain't a human being in the wide world that I care a snap for, no not one snap—except just you."

"I guessed it all the time, Sabriny, I guessed it from the start. And now run along, and don't you never go and care fur no one else, so long as you've got your ole Dad."

* * * * *

"Dad, has Ma gone to bed?"

"No, she's jest down suller for yeast."

"Come out here, Dad, just a minute, just *one* minute. Oh, Dad, I'm *so* happy."

"Not wantin' no coffin mebbby."

"Not wanting any coffin or *anything*—*he's* waiting out at the gate. I've told him all about Sabriny, Dad and Co., and what do you think? He wants to be the *Co.*"

"Sho! Who'd 'a' thought it. Wal, run along, Sabriny, I hear Ma on the stairs."

"Curls and shavin's, and chists and cradles, and coffins and lovers; and mebbby, bimeby, cradles and coffins ag'in. And then old Dad, he'll step out and t'will be jest Sabriny and Co. Useless old Dad!"

2000000

A DROVE OF FACTS
AND
A FLOCK OF FANCIES

HE STARTED out early in the morning, even before sunrise, for he had a drove of Facts and a flock of Fancies to take to market.

Every Fact was the best of its kind, A.1 Registered. Every Fact stood on three legs as facts must do in order to be stable and yet adjustable to uneven foundations; a four-legged fact would teeter, just as a four-legged milking-stool rocks on an uneven barn floor.

These Facts were of a monotonous, dull gray colour, with thick hides and a few bristles. They were of a sort of square shape, but inclined to elongate when they moved.

It was a handsome drove, and represented a good sum of money.

The man had also a flock of Fancies for sale; these he had carefully crated for easier transportation, for they had wings, and were restless, and also a little wild and uncertain to handle. The crate was made of woven osiers, delightfully

braided and interlaced with the bark still showing green and bronze-brown.

The Fancies were something like birds, but also somewhat like butterflies. In colour they were an idealized rainbow, modified with grays and whites with now and then ebony splashes for distinguishment.

The Facts plodded along steadily on their three legs, giving him no trouble at all, and no delight. But they would bring him much gold in the market place.

The Fancies, on the contrary, kept him busy; they fluttered with anger at their prison bars and shed bits of iridescent down that came floating out through the loosely woven osiers, as if rainbows were shedding feathers.

They twittered and made plaintive broken trills while they pecked at their bars.

Suddenly at a sharp turn in the road the crate tipped over and both sides gave way, and out flew the whole flock.

Such a burst of Fancies never before was seen, and he, in despair, threw his arms up toward the sky and cried aloud, "Oh, ye Gods of Greece!"

Now never before in all his life had he called on the Greek Gods for aid, and presumably they were as surprised as he himself was, but they came to his aid.

His Fancies circled widely around his head

with soft pipings, they lit on his shoulders and on his hands; they flew wide winged over the hedges into the fields, then up into the blue sky; and always going or coming they lit upon the backs of the plodding Facts and gave derisive little nips and pecks at them.

"I shall never lose those Fancies of mine," said the man, reassured; "I couldn't lose them if I would, and by the Gods I would not! They shall be free."

Strange, but he was swearing again by his new-found Gods, not even noticing that he was doing so. He was amazingly happy.

When he arrived at the market place with his drove of pedigreed Facts and his flock of Fancies he was the sensation of the moment. The crowd gathered round him with shouts of admiration.

He cunningly thought to himself, I will sell my Fancies first, the Facts will sell later, they always sell.

So he offered his Fancies in rhyme and song, he sang of their delectable companionship while they perched on his cap and on his outstretched arm and hand.

The crowd laughed but soon turned away; they were not here at the market place to buy Fancies.

One little girl only came to him and said: "Please, sir, will you sell me one little Fancy for a penny?"

"Indeed I will," said he, and he held out to her a plump little winged fellow with azure coat and violet wings; but before he gave it into her hands he said, "Here is my sweetest Fancy. What will you do with it?"

"Please, sir," said she, "I will take it home, and my mother will cook it for supper."

He cast the bird into the high air and cried aloud, "Oh, ye dear Gods of Greece, protect these radiant Fancies—and me."

This prayer greatly shocked the public, but it did not prevent them from buying all the Facts, which they got at amazingly low prices, for the man seemed indifferent to their value and in a hurry to be off.

It was, however, a very goodly sum of money that he carried with him in a leathern purse tied to his belt.

He was walking homeward slowly and reluctantly when he suddenly stopped and put his hand to his head and gave a cry of regret. From his pocket he drew a small bit of purple woollen cloth; a scrap of paper was pinned on it, with these words written on it:—"Match this sample of my dress with cotton thread, and also buy one yard and seven eighths of purple ribbon to match it—it must be just one inch wide with a corded edge. *Don't forget!*"

He had forgotten. He looked down at his feet, and there stood a new little square Fact

looking stupidly at him. He gazed at it uncomprehendingly; at first he thought it must be one of his old Facts that had followed him home from market; then, suddenly, it dawned upon him that here was a brand-new Fact, the forerunner probably of a lot of new Facts that would be turning up, day after day, and have to be fed and marketed next year, and then more new Facts, year after year. No end of the square, uninteresting, everlasting Facts!

He stooped, and taking off the leather bag he tied it with a thong around the neck of the new Fact; then he wrote on the back of the scrap of paper that had been pinned to the purple worsted sample these words, "I am sorry, but I forgot the thread and the ribbon." He pinned this, together with the sample, on to the leather bag, then gave a little shove to the new Fact and said to it, "Now go home." And the Fact started off on his three-legged trot.

The man looked after him and smiled, then he sat down on a bank of green grass and all the Fancies flew to him and hovering over him wove a garment with their wings that hid him from sight in a flurry of iridescence.

That evening at sundown the wife went to the gate to watch for him. She could not see him, but out of the dust-bow made by the rays of the setting sun she saw a little Fact emerge. He came to her and she undid the leather bag,

full of gold, and she gave a cluck of happy greed like a satisfied hen. Then she saw the writing on the paper, and read, "I am sorry but I forgot the thread and the ribbon."

"*Sorry* he forgot, is he? Well, he'd *better* be—and good riddance to him, *I* say!"

A CHIP OF THE OLD BLOCK

ONE scene, one act.

Scene in a cobbler's shop. Leather hangs on the wall. A pile of old shoes to be mended lies on floor or bench. An old stove in the corner. A cobbler's bench, some straight-backed, splint-bottomed chairs, and any other properties of a cobbler's shop. The cobbler wears a leather apron, flannel shirt with suspenders. He has heavy, gray, overhanging eyebrows, hair standing up straight, and a wrinkled, strong face. He looks like a weather-beaten old bird of prey. He is pegging on a boot, keeps at work most of the time, and talks with tools in hand. He changes the hammer and pegs for an awl and waxed thread after the first few sentences.

The tramp opens the door cautiously, sticks his head in, looks around, then comes in and half closes the door. He is untidy, slouching, half humble and half blustering. His first manner is beseeching.

TRAMP: Father, I've come home.

[Cobbler looks the tramp over but makes no answer and returns to his pegging.]

TRAMP: Father, don't you know me? Don't you know your son Ben that ran away from home so many years ago? I am Ben. I've learnt a lot sence then and I am sorry for what I did; I've come home to stay with you and to help you in your old age; you are gittin' too old to live alone and work so hard. I am goin' to stay right here and help.

[The cobbler looks for a tool at his side then slowly waxes his thread before he answers, then he says slowly and with emphasis.]

COBBLER: No, you ain't come *home*, and you ain't come home to *stay*, nuther.

TRAMP [*whining*]: Don't you know your own son, father? Don't you know Benny? Don't you remember how I ran away because you tole me to go out and bring in a log of firewood and I wouldn't do it? Don't you remember how you said you would lick me if I didn't mind, and I said I would run away and never come back, and you said "Go" and I went, and I ain't never come back, till now, like I said I wouldn't. I am sorry now that I didn't mind you. I've turned over a new leaf; I ain't always been as good as I ought to have been but I am going to be good now and stay right here and comfort you. Ain't you glad to see me again?

[The cobbler does not look at him or seem to hear him, but sews at his work.]

TRAMP: Father, I've repented, I am all right now. I'd ought to have studied to have been a minister like you wanted I should, but I got into bad ways and bad company.

[The cobbler leans forward and points to the door with his awl.]

COBBLER: Young feller, you kin go out or stay in as suits you, but you best shut that door, it ain't any too warm in here, anyway.

[Tramp shuts door but keeps his hand on the latch for a minute as if not certain whether it was not best to be on the other side, then he sneaks nearer the cobbler.]

TRAMP: Father, ain't you goin' to forgive your son? You hadn't ought to be so hard and unforgivin' to any one that's sorry. The gospels say——

COBBLER *[interrupting him sharply]*: Quit that, young feller! I've been studyin' on your case sence you come in here and I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I notice that your right heel is all trod down and wore out, and if you'll take that boot off, I'll mend it for you and I'll do it for nothin', too, and then I'll take down that whip that hangs over yonder and I'll give you the all-fireddest lickin' that you ever got, and then you kin go.

TRAMP *[getting mad]*: You old brute, you! You always was a hard man, everybody says so and I won't take off my boot for you to mend,

and I'll go away this time and I won't *never* come back again no matter how much you want me to [*whining*]. I should think you would want to be kind to your only son, you will be sorry for this some time when it is too late and I am gone. Good-bye, father. [*Hesitates for a minute and then hunches up his shoulders and goes partly out, then turns and shakes his fist at the cobbler, goes out and leaves the door open. The cobbler sits and shakes his head slowly, speaking to himself.*]

COBBLER: No son of mine.

[*Mr. Wood, the minister, comes in immediately.*]

MINISTER: Good morning, Good morning, Deacon Atwood.

COBBLER: Mornin', parson, set. [*Pushes a chair toward him.*]

MINISTER: It's a cold morning, Deacon, mercury way down below at seven o'clock. This is the warmest place I've seen yet, and it smells good, too, in here. I reckon you've got in some new leather. I was brought up on the smell of leather. I declare! it makes me feel just as if I was in my old home; I love the smell of leather, and have, ever since I was a child in petticoats. I sometimes think that I was cut out for a shoemaker instead of a minister; but I didn't go into the ministry without thought, either. At first I went in only because my

father had wanted me to, and then I felt the call. Before I die I hope to justify his hopes. I was a disappointment to my father.

COBBLER: Is your father living, Parson?

MINISTER [*after a pause and with sadness, slowly*]: Yes, he is living.

COBBLER: Yes, I just got in a nice lot of leather, I callate it will last me all winter. Mebby it will last as long as I do, till I am gone where there ain't no shoes to wear out and no need of leather to mend 'em. I am gittin' on in years, and they lie heavy on me.

MINISTER: Nonsense! You are the youngest and the spryest man in town.

COBBLER [*searching for something and his shaking shoulders showing that he is laughing*]: I suppose I be as spry as most of my age, but I ain't by a long sight so spry as that young tramp was in gittin' out of here when he got mad cause he seen [*chuckle*] that I was minded to take the whip down. He wouldn't even wait to have his boot heel mended, and I offered to do it fur nothin', not charging a cent for time nor for leather.

[*The minister rises and walks around the room looking interestedly at the leather and the shoes, then he draws his chair nearer to the cobbler as if he had determined to talk seriously.*]

MINISTER: Deacon Atwood, what made you

offer to mend that young tramp's boot for nothing? He looked like an able-bodied man, capable of work. Rather a mean face, though! Did you know who he was?

COBBLER [*working at intervals as he talks*]: I guess that young feller didn't know rightly who he was himself; he claimed to be my son who ran away fifteen years ago this very month. I guess you know the story, most everybody does, and you have been here five years [*pause*].

I often thought I'd tell you about it, cause your name is Benjamin, and cause you have a little son named Benjamin and a little gal named Sairy, same as my wife was. That made me often think I'd like to tell you about it. But somehow it come difficult.

MINISTER: And I have often wanted to talk with you about it, very particularly, for some very good reasons. I've got something on my mind.

COBBLER: That young feller that was in here had picked up the story somewhere in town and he thought to come it over me by pretending to be my Benjamin, but he didn't take me in. I persuaded him that he wa'n't no son of mine and that he didn't want anything at my hands, not even a lickin' [*chuckles*]. I jest pintoed to that whip that hangs up there, same as it did when my son ran away. When I look at that whip I don't feel so old as I do when I

set here and think [*pause*]. That whip has hung there for fifteen years, waitin' for the day when he comes home to bring in that log of fire-wood [*pause*]. Did you say that you was brought up on the smell of leather? Mebbby your father was a shoemaker, too, same as I be.

MINISTER [*with deliberation*]: Yes, my father was a shoemaker; you make me think of him.

COBBLER: And you make me think of what I wanted my son to be, and you always *have* made me think of that ever sence you came here and was settled [*with a sigh*]. I never wanted anything in all my life so much as I wanted my son to be a minister of the gospel [*looks straight ahead as if seeing his life and disappointment*].

MINISTER: You are sure that that young fellow that came in here wasn't your son?

COBBLER: No, he wa'n't no son of mine [*goes to work with energy*].

MINISTER: How can you be certain that he was not your son? I have known the story of your son ever since I came here, yes, and before that, too; I have always believed that he would come back. I hope that when he does you will have cause to forgive him. How do you know that you will recognize him after all these years? The boy has become a man, and changed.

COBBLER: *Not know my son!* Not know Benjamin! I guess I should know him if he was to turn up after a *hundred* years. *My*

Benjamin! I would know him ef we met by *accident* on the street. Why! I should know him ef he entered town at midnight and I was in bed and didn't see him, I'd *feel* him.

MINISTER [*gently but impressively*]: He would be about my age; you wouldn't whip a man of my age?

COBBLER: A *promise* is a *promise*, and when Ben comes home he will get the licking that I promised him, ef I can wield the whip. He'll *expect* it. It is *justice*, and nothin' short of justice. He is sure to come home sometime [*pause*]. I am sorry that his mother did not live to see him again. She died four years after he ran away; she believed in him. She went so far as to say that she wouldn't wonder ef he became a minister of the Gospels after all. There wa'n't a meal, breakfast, dinner, or supper, that she didn't set a plate for him on the table, and she kept the sheets on his bed aired in case he came suddenly at night. She set by the fire and pictured how he would come, and she knit socks fur him in case of need. *She* knew and *I* know, as sure as there is a Power in heaven, that Benjamin will come home. It is borne in upon me that it will not be long now before he comes. Ben wa'n't all bad, he had good blood, but he was headstrong at times, and he needed chastening. This 'ere feller that came in here to-day he wa'n't no good, he was *bad*, *bad* all through. He had

picked up the story straight enough. He thought to take me in, *me, Ben's father!* He is the fourth feller that has tried that game, one feller went so fur as to write me a letter askin' me to send him money to come home with; *he* wanted to help me, too. They are all keen to help me in my old age. I didn't answer that feller's letter. When Benjamin is ready to come home he will come straight, he won't write. It may take him years to make up his mind, fur he is a chip of the old block, but he will come straight, he ain't no coward. I shouldn't much wonder ef he brought in that stick of wood that I sent him out arter. That would be like Ben—yes, that would be like him.

MINISTER: And when he does come don't you think you might for once forget that injunction about the rod, and trust that time has chastened the boy, that perhaps the good has triumphed over the bad?

COBBLER: I have often thought about that; but a vow is a vow. I vowed with reason that I would chastise him. Mebby I was hasty, mebby the Lord has meted out to both of us what was our due, but all the same I sha'n't never forget to have that whip in readiness when he does come.

MINISTER [*rising*]: Deacon, if you don't mind I will go out and get a stick of wood for the fire, it is getting low. [*He goes out and*

comes in with a stick of wood which he lays by the stove, then he stands before the cobbler and says: Is there any mark by which you could know your son, Deacon Atwood?

COBBLER: Why! I tell you there's no need. I'd know him anywheres, but there *is* a way, and *he* knows it and *I* know it. My son Ben he hadn't any big toe on his right foot, he chopped it off when he was a mite of a boy trying to chop wood. Why! he wa'n't more'n seven years old, and by that I should know him anywhere, only there'd be no need. I'd know him without that, but that is the reason that I wanted the tramp to take off his boot. I am set, but I hope that I am not bigoted.

MINISTER: Father, I have brought in that stick of wood for the fire, and now I will take off my right boot if you will mend it for me. [*The cobbler looks long and searchingly at the minister then rises and takes the whip from the wall and places it in the minister's hands.*]

COBBLER: Son, Benjamin, my son, you have beat your old father this time, but you must remember that it was me that first led your feet into the paths of righteousness, and that the Scripters are right when they teach "Spare the rod and spile the child" [*he lays his hands tenderly on the minister's shoulders and says*]: I wish your mother was here to-day, mebbey she is.

A STUDY IN HANDS

I WAS riding up town in a State Street car when I discovered myself intently studying the hands of the man who sat opposite me. I had not particularly noticed him till I found that I was unconsciously interested in his hands: they were crossed, one over the other, on the head of his cane; and they held a pair of gloves in their loose grasp. The hands were fine in form, as beautiful as some of the sculptured hands on Italian tombs. I had been getting pleasure in merely looking at them, without in any way analyzing the cause of my gratification; then my eyes naturally followed up the line of the sleeve of the well-fitting spring overcoat to the collar, and then to the face of the man.

Above a certain grade one overcoat does not materially differ from another; still one does see now and then an outward covering which carries an essential revelation. This coat announced quite plainly that the man who wore it was a New Yorker, that he was a club-man and incidentally a gentleman, and also that leisure was his absorbing profession. He was gazing directly in front. I was naturally in-

cluded in his line of vision, but at the same time I was absolutely excluded by reason of his entire unconsciousness of me: not at all an assumed obliviousness, but the outcome of acquired indifference to casual surroundings.

"These hands have done some momentous work in the world, henceforth they will be folded: for better or worse their work is completed."

I heard these words as if they had been spoken to me, not at all as if I had clothed an idea in words for better comprehension.

The hands were, as I have said, beautifully formed and well kept, but it was not on either of these counts that they held my attention; it was rather because they seemed to have attained a distinct individuality apart from their possessor.

I could not explain the conviction that they had done some definitive work; in their passivity they bore a singular look of self-intelligence.

What had they done? They were not literary hands; no, nor were they used to diplomatic red-tape or ribbons; they had never carried the green baize bag from office to court, nor were they the acquisitive hands of the financier; and most certainly they had never toiled for a living in the realm of material things.

What had they done? Why were they out of the conflict?

I was forced to respect them, they held the secret in so loose but significant a grasp.

Then a vague unrest or fear infused itself into my interest. I wished that the man would move them, that I might see them in action. The wish grew to be imperative, unbearable; it was morbid. If only something would happen to lessen the persistent imprint on my retina of the crossed hands!

I turned and looked out of the window. I counted the foot-travellers as we passed them. I read the signs over the shop windows.

We crossed the bridge; people got out and other people got in. The man was oblivious to all these comings and goings, and I found myself again studying the hands crossed over the tan gloves, on the head of the cane.

The car stopped, and in through the narrow door flowed a tide of velvet, silk, and lace, with an accompanying whiff of violets. There was a pressure for seats, there were polite refusals and humorous philosophies, with stray shafts of wit at Chicago's expense which seemed to cement the party together and to set them quite apart from the rest of us.

A tired, slender girl with a jaunty, cheap hat, gave up her seat to one of the youngest of the incomers. Evidently she was hypnotized by the picture hat and the bunch of violets so carelessly worn in the open jacket.

Little by little the first one of the party was pushed up the aisle till she stood almost between me and the man of the hands. She had unwillingly progressed backward, yielding inch by inch, grasping her full draperies with one hand while with the other she made desperate, tight-laced clutches at the various straps that offered themselves successively to her. She held her dress up with an ungloved hand, which was sufficiently clothed in a multitude of rings.

She was redolent of wealth. In her last clutch for a strap the glove fell to the muddy car floor; she did not miss it for a moment, and it lay there just between me and the man of the hands.

I watched him, expecting him to move; I thought that now the sentient hands would reveal themselves, in the act of picking up and returning the glove.

There was not a motion of them, not even an involuntary contraction of the muscles that await an order from the brain.

He *sees*, but does not advertise his seeing, I thought.

Then, deliberately, and with intention, he raised his foot and placed it on the glove. So wanton, so inexplicable an act I have never seen; it was an atrocity, taken in connection with his evident breeding. All traditions were outraged; in the act not only that glove but all

the innumerable gloves of romance and chivalry were muddled and trampled by his offending foot.

I heard myself give a protesting gasp, but I do not know whether he heard or not; his eyes were still set toward the, to him, nothingness of outward human things.

Half way between us the elaborated bulk of black lace made up over a lavender silk lady was swaying in uncomfortable apprehension, no seat seeming available.

Suddenly her eyes fell on the man opposite me, and she exclaimed, "Why, Dick! Why, Cousin Dick, where in all the world did you come from? . . . Oh, dear me, I've dropped one of my gloves!" And she agitated herself to investigate the floor.

"It's here, I am keeping it for you," said Cousin Dick. And he indicated the glove under his foot with the slightest possible gesture of his head.

The lady's tiny headgear was tossed with indignation and she said, more to herself than to him, "The same old"—I thought she said "brute!"

Evidently the violet-wearing young girl caught a glimpse of him, for she called out, "Why, is that you, Cousin Dick?"

"I thought I was myself," rejoined he, "until your mother called me a——"

"Sh, Dick, don't make a scandal!" broke in the lavender lady. "And now tell me what brings you out into these wilds? Have you come out to the wedding?"

"—or to the funeral?" interpolated he.

"That's so like you, Dick dear, so quick and so clever, but hardly—well, you know I never meant to say that! Oh, Dick, I have just been down to see poor, dear Adelaide. You know she is much worse to-day. I only saw her for a minute—so sad, isn't it? It would be very awkward if anything should happen right now, though it would, of course, save all of us a long journey out here again, just now, as the hot weather is coming on."

"Exactly! And is the day and hour fixed for *both* functions? I hope they don't conflict."

"Dick, how can you! You know perfectly well what I mean, there is no use disguising matters, it is absolutely necessary in these crowded times to make arrangements for everything beforehand, no matter how much one's feelings are concerned."

"Quite true, and that is why I want to know if Adelaide has taken this into her consideration. Is she obliging as usual, thinking of everybody except herself?"

"Now, Dick! I shouldn't have known her! Have *you* seen Adelaide?"

This question seemed to me to have been

sprung on him with intent, as if to surprise him into some betrayal, but he did not give the slightest sign of consciousness, he did not answer her, but rose and, touching his hat, left the car.

The bustling, lavender lady sank into the vacant seat, and with unabated plenitude of manner said to the friend who sat next to her, "Cousin Dick just *hates* me and he has hated me ever since that terrible winter in New York. My, but that *was* a season! We lived on social dynamite, and now to think of poor Adelaide Perrin's dying out here! Such a beauty as she was, too! Everybody raved over her. But she was *sly*, though, I've always said so, and I always will, for she was just *sly*, that's the word!

"I couldn't ever see why Dick fancied her. But he just hated *me*; he seemed to think that I had something to do with those horrid rumours that were flying about that winter after they were engaged—the ones that finally brought about the tragedy. But I didn't have a thing to do with it, why *should* I? Of course, everybody talked and everybody heard, one can't be deaf in society; but Dick chose to think I was to blame.

"You saw him set his foot on my glove just now—the brute! Well, that matches something he did once before—that very winter I was speaking about. One evening, we had been dining out, and I laid my gloves on the window-

sill. He took them up and held them, looking at them for a moment, then he deliberately threw one of them out of the window into the rain. You may believe whether I was mad or not! He didn't say one word. 'You owe me a pair of gloves for that!' said I—I was perfectly furious with him.

"'You owe much more,' said he, with a strange smile, the kind of thing that makes your blood run chilly for a moment.

"I knew, of course, what he meant; it was his way of telling me that he hated me and that he held me accountable for some of the talk that was flying around town about him and Adelaide.

"That happened more than fifteen years ago. Think of that man's memory! Just now he wanted to remind me of it. I know him! It was just two weeks before the date set for his marriage to Adelaide.

"The talk about her flirtation with that Washington man was so disagreeable that everybody was wondering if the wedding would ever come off. The bets were against it.

"All that season Adelaide looked exactly like a wraith, but she held her head pretty high those days, and the trousseau that she was getting was something to make people stare, especially as Adelaide never had much money to spend.

"We just held our breath. Of course Dick never showed in any way that he knew what was being said, he went everywhere, and was perfectly devoted to Adelaide; and all the while these horrid things were in the air.

"Finally it was whispered that she had actually been secretly married to the Washington man. His name was Denio—Frank N. Denio. It's a perfectly ghastly tale! But I've just got to tell you—it was so like him to trample on my glove!

"One evening at a ball given in Adelaide's honour—the very swellest thing of the season—just before supper, Denio was found on the floor, in the supper-room—*dead*.

"There wasn't the slightest doubt as to the manner of his death. Some things tell their own story—apoplexy is a convenient name for inconvenient deaths. But *I* knew, and everybody else knew—or guessed. I can't bear to think of it, even after this long time—but they said that there were marks—well, let's drop it."

"You surely don't mean anything so terrible—why did you think——?"

"Did you ever notice Dick's hands? Well, the next time you meet him you just study his *hands*. Don't ask me why, you just look at his hands. You study them—you do as I tell you. Oh, yes, it is easy to call me queer, but you do as I tell you!"

"What became of Adelaide?"

"Oh, of course she went out of society; then she went abroad, and finally she came home. She had become a Catholic. Later she came out here to Chicago to live.

"Did I tell you that that night just as soon as I heard what had happened I went to find her and they told me she had gone home with a headache?"

"You don't suppose *she* knew!"

"I don't *suppose anything*. I am just telling you what I know. Ever since then Adelaide has devoted herself to the Church, and she has spent a fortune in charities—I call it charitable penance."

"But where did she get the money for her charities? I thought you said she was poor."

"Not a cent of her own! But all the same she has given away thousands upon thousands of dollars to the poor."

"Where in the world did it come from?"

"Well, Dick is rich, for one thing; where should *you* think it came from? You'd better study Dick's hands, as I said."

"I would rather have you tell me, I may never see him again. Do *you* know?"

"No, I don't *know*, nobody knows, that is, what I know wouldn't stand as evidence in a court of law. But my idea is that Dick's hands know the whole story. I believe they

got the best of Dick that night at the ball, and that is saying a great deal, because nobody and nothing else ever got the best of Dick before nor since. Even Adelaide did not, in the end."

Then she lowered her voice and said, "To-day is Thursday, and if poor dear Adelaide *should* pass away to-night, it is all arranged that the papers shouldn't have the news till the next day—on account of the wedding, you know. *That* simply can't be put off, of course."

I saw no more of the lavender lady; but I found myself following with unwonted interest the wedding—and the death-notices in the papers. It was on account of the latter that I found myself, three days later, before the Cathedral at noon. The mist was drifting in from the lake; the building through this veil grew magnificent in its wavering proportions. Through the Cathedral door passed dim figures, shadowy like gray spirits.

A hearse stood there with many attending carriages, waiting for that something that man may not take with him at his departure, but is constrained to leave, with apologies, to the kind offices of friends.

I saw the man with The Hands as he came down the steps, and I stood aside to let him pass. In one hand he held a bronze-like leaf, such a leaf as one might take from the hands of the dead.

I had come to think of this man and his hands as separate personalities, fellow-travellers in time and space. In one deed done by the hands the man had but acquiesced. Thereafter it was the hands that had submitted.

The newspaper paragraph which had brought me to the Cathedral was the death-notice of Adelaide Perrin *Denio*.

A FLIGHT OF FEATHERS

THERE were three of them, Jane Bassett, Dilly Bassett, and Sophronia Bassett.

There had been a fourth, Deborah, but she had married and died, leaving one daughter. This niece of the Bassett girls, as they were called, also married and lived in New York.

She could never find time to run up to the farm to see her aunts; she was too busy, she lived up to a very high standard which might be called the theory of the balance of weight, measure, and proportion as applied to conduct. In such a scheme of life, of course, little things must give way to the more important. An Old Ladies' Home would outweigh three little old aunts in the country; besides which, she knew that they had a farm, and a cow, hens, and geese, what could they need of her?

The Bassett girls were not in need of patronage. The name of Bassett was the best in town, it inhered, it was not a label pasted on; it was, so to speak "dyed in the wool." It was all-embracing, it included even the little black-and-tan breed of dogs, one of which was always in evidence at the farm.

The best eggs at the village store were Bassett eggs, and Bassett eggs brought the highest price and were always in demand for hatching.

Everything in Pa Bassett's time had brought the highest market price, everything was sold at an advantage derived from the name. Their geese were superlative, but one other thing that was also superlative was never sold. No geese feathers had ever been offered for sale.

Live geese feathers were the Bassett fetish. The Bassett girls had never heard the word fetish but they had the worship. A feather pillow was an object of respectful desire and of solicitous preservation.

Their treasure-house of feathers had a light-hearted quality that does not obtain where gold is hoarded.

"Where's Sophrony?" asked Dilly. "I ain't seen her sence noonday."

"Oh, I guess she's in the sullar, empty'n them pillers of hern."

"Which ones, the ones that Aunt 'Cindy left her?"

"No, them other ones she's kep so long in the attic, hanging up in that blue cotton bag."

"You don't say so! Not the long bolster, the one she allers meant to make into pillers for the spare bed?"

"I dunno, I guess 'twas them; she said yister-day that she was goin' to be pretty busy this

week, when ole Mis' Marvin ast her to come over to her house and help her to make jell."

"It's awful draughty down sullar when the wind is in the east. Has she got her head tied up?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Sophrony she's gittin' careful; she says she ain't goin' to die till she's got her last ticking washed and the feathers put back. She's got one set put back already, to my own knowledge, besides that set that is hern by rights, them that Eph's wife uses on her own bed, over to the Corners; they'd ought to have been Sophrony's, she was named for Eph's mother. Seems as if they'd ought to belong to Sophrony, but she ain't one to make a fuss with her own folks, she's kind o' set, too, when she's made up her mind, fur all she's so still. I guess she'll get them pillers yet."

The two old heads wagged wisely. Jane washed up the blue china cups carefully; the aroma of home-made soft soap was in the air—it is like incense in the nostrils of a thrifty New England woman. And what *is* soft soap but the incarnation of an idea, the means of purification, the ultimate symbol of thrift, the coordinated result of generations of economists with a passion for duty regulated by seasons, the recurrent periods marked by soft-soap (spring), jell (summer), cider-apple-sass (autumn), and patch-work quilt (winter).

"I guess," said Jane, tentatively, as if the idea was just formulating in her mind, "I guess I'll jest c'lect the pillers that belong to me and hang 'em out in the sun. I've been meanin' to git at 'em all the spring, it's high time they was looked to; they smelt jest the least bit musty the last time I seen 'em, and that was a week ago last Saturday, the day I was showin' 'em to Ann Munn's sister. I was dretful 'fraid she'd notice it."

"It's a good day for pillers," said Dilly, "but I sha'n't be able to git to mine to-day, I'm afeared, till I get these aprons run up. The Ladies' Aid Society's goin' to pack up the Missionary box to-morrow. Mebby I can hem 'em to-night."

They worked in silence for a time, their faces as gentle and as vacant as the pillow ticks that were airing on the clothesline. The line was stretched between the plum tree and the tall stake that supported the birdhouse.

There was an unusual activity in the air: feathers were flying, feathers not propelled by bird bodies, but strange feathers, large and proud like white sails of ships; the birds saw them whirled in the spring wind and were intent on securing them for the linings of their nests, making ready for the family that was to be.

From the clothesline fluttered a long bolster cover, its striped length careering madly, now

collapsed, now filled to plethoric proportions. In spite of Sophronia's careful picking out of every feather she could find, stray feathers found freedom in the breeze, to the delight of the nest-builders.

Down in the cool, damp cellar Sophronia sat at her rites. A scant, unearthly light came in at the high, unglazed windows above her head; an earthy smell pervaded the place. In corners it gave way to other odours: in one place, on a shelf, stood a pickle-jar, and around it sweet odours of spice and the sharpness of vinegar clung; the potato-bin had an arc of raw perfume, while a promise of quickening life was shown in a slender, pale, ghost-like finger of a sprout, a finger that essayed to reach the light.

Sophronia sat on a backless wooden chair; two boards were placed beneath it to keep the legs from sinking in the soft ground, another board kept her feet from the dampness that might penetrate to her old bones. She ran to bone as Jane did to flesh, a sort of natural selection by which one became the prototype of the empty and one of the filled pillow.

"There," said Sophronia, "you ain't a mite too fat to suit me." She shook and patted the bulging pillow and smoothed its distended sides. "Some folks seem jest possessed to git their pillers as thin as a rail. I ain't that kind. I want 'em fat, so as to fill up the cold spots in

the neck, kind of comfortable on cold nights. Jane she's different, I dunno as she's got any cold spots; she's soft and warm, she's so fat; she takes after her grandma Bennett, she does."

Sophronia cocked her head on one side and eyed the companion pillow that lay on the boards at her feet. "Sakes alive! I dunno but I've gone and got one of these pillers fatter'n t'other one, and I hefted 'em careful, too. I declare for't, I believe I'll have to rip t'other one a mite and pull out a handful of feathers."

Her face wore a grave, judicial expression as she lifted first one pillow and then the other, calculating their weights and comparing them. She might well have the gravity of a judge for she was weighing, if the truth were known, her own moral nature; she was hefting her own strength of mind; she knew in her innermost soul that there was not the sixteenth of an ounce difference in the weight. She was indulging herself in a debauch, the pillow-frenzy was upon her.

Again she lifted the pillows one at a time; she sighed and shook her head; she argued with herself, "Pretty close, pretty nigh the same, mebbly the right-hand one is *jest* the least mite bigger. I dunno as 'tis and I dunno *as* 'tis. She held them at arm's length, one in her left hand and one in her right hand, then she half closed her eyes so as to leave her mental sight

unembarrassed, and slowly and cautiously her left eye closed a little tighter. It was a tentative wink, a wink, if it might be called one, which was the outcome of her baser nature, a last effort to overthrow her moral conviction that the weight of the two pillows was equal; the wink tipped the scale. "There certainly is a difference. I must take out a handful from this one and put it into that. The girls will think I am everlastingly slow, but *pillers is pillers*, and *feathers is feathers*, whatever they may say."

Awhile later Sophronia emerged from the cellar, her eyebrows encrusted with down, her headgear awry, looking like a species of human hen.

Dilly was alone in the kitchen. Jane had gone upstairs to get to work on *her* pillows; Dilly could hear her beating them with unremitting energy. She envied her, and sewed with a sullen rectitude on the apron for the missionaries.

"Where's Jane?" demanded Sophronia with a touch of sharpness.

"Oh, Jane's up in the attic lookin' over them *pillers of hern*."

"Which *pillers*?"

"I dunno, mebbby them live geese feathers from the last picking."

"Umph!" There was disapproval in this ejaculation; she creaked upstairs to see if Jane

was doing exactly what she knew she was doing. She fully appreciated the necessity for her own attention to her pillows, but she had a feeling that Jane's activities were a sort of weak imitation, a vanity, a waste of time. She just barely tolerated Jane's pillows.

"Fur the lan's sake, what be you doin', Jane? You make enough noise to wake the dead!"

"I'm just beatin' my pillers before I hang 'em out in the sun; how's yourn gittin' on?"

"First rate. I suppose you and Dilly will think I've got 'em too thick, but I like mine fat, you know."

Sophronia and Jane went to the Sewing Circle that afternoon. Dilly had an attack of accommodating rheumatism, and stayed at home. She sewed to the end of her apron seam, and then with carefully modulated steps she mounted with dignity the steep stairs, and opened the closet where she kept *her* pillows. She was the orderly one of the Bassett sisters. Between each pillow and the next in the high pile lay a carefully spread newspaper. Little slips of paper were pinned to each pillow with numbers written on them. Three pairs lay divided with scrupulous care. She lifted them carefully, and lovingly laid them one by one on a chair which she dusted beforehand; then she wiped off the shelves with a dry cloth and laid the pillows reverently back. Her foot hit the wooden cradle

that had been stored for fifty years beneath the lower shelf; it rocked with a homely, sympathetic joggle. Dilly was very happy in communion with her sacred pillows.

When the last one of the Bassett sisters had been separated by death from these idols, and the pillow roll-call sounded, there were five pillows that responded, in Jane's division, there were three pairs to Dilly's credit, and eight plethoric forms were in line as Sophronia's contribution.

This accretion of three lifetimes, this light-hearted company represented the imaginative flights of the three sisters, and this outward sign of inward aspiration bore this inscription: "To our beloved niece, in token of our affection and our admiration, we leave these pillows as a slight reminder of her three aunts." Signed, "Aunt Jane, Aunt Dilly, Aunt Sophronia."

When at her breakfast table in New York the niece read the letter written by the minister of the Baptist Church to whom this bequest had been entrusted, she sat up rigid with astonishment and disapproval.

"John," said she, "did you ever hear anything so trying. The minister writes that the last of my old aunts has died."

"I am sorry but I suppose she was pretty old."

"Yes, but that is not the worst of it, they have left me all their pillows."

"Well, pillows are useful things. It seems to me you once told me that their hobby was pillows."

"I should think it was! How many do you think they left? Nineteen pillows all packed and waiting for me to send for them. Nineteen, and I never have or will use a pillow. I won't let the children use them. I believe they are unsanitary and worse than useless. You are the only Sybarite in the family, and you know what I think of that."

"Splendid chance to do something for your Old Ladies' Home. It would be a fitting thing to commemorate the thrift and energy of the old aunts, and benefit the Home at the same time."

"What an idea! You know I couldn't conscientiously give the Home anything that I disapprove of for myself."

"Couldn't you stretch your conscience for once, as a recognition of the well-meant gift?"

"No, I couldn't, I really couldn't."

"Well, give them to a foundling hospital, babies haven't consciences, and they must have pillows."

"No, John, don't quibble, you know my principles; but what *shall* I do?"

"Give them to me."

"*You?* What an idea!"

"Yes, give them to me, I won't give them to

any hospital, infant asylum, old ladies' home, or any blessed institution, nor to any individual. 'Cross my heart and hope to die' if I do."

"But what in the world will *you* do with them?"

"That will be my one and only secret of a lifetime. You will trust me?"

"But it is so ridiculous!"

"Not at all, you don't want them and I do."

"Where are you going to have them sent?"

"That's a part of my secret."

"Well," said his wife, reluctantly, "here is the minister's address. Honour bright, no breaking of your promise? I can't think what you mean to do with them."

And he never broke his promise, but when he rides to his fishing-camp in a buckboard, for it is forty miles from the railroad, he likes to lead the driver on to telling about the time when there was a strange downfall of feathers one night in the early spring. He says that "when the folks down in the 'holler' woke up one morning the ground was white in the corners of the fences and sheltered spots, and they thought it had snowed, but when they looked the patches turned out to be feathers; the birds lined their nests with down for the whole season."

"Queerest thing you ever see," said the driver, "there had been a fresh breeze from the

mountains where they seemed to come from. But you know folks say that sometimes it rains frogs or toads. I never seed it, but I've heard tell on it. And I can't see why feathers is any stranger than frogs, anyway I *have* seen them feathers, and what's more I've got a bottle full that I picked up, and kep'."

The husband of the niece of the three old aunts smiles as he listens to this tale, for he likes to think of that flight of feathers.

AN EXPERIMENT IN TIME

I WAS going down hill, feeling tired and discouraged. The landscape was monotonous, the hills seemed low, and the birds sang only occasionally in the hedges.

Suddenly it came to me how good, how very good, everything had been to my palate as a child. I thought how much easier the journey would be if I could go back just for a few minutes. I turned quickly, retraced the few feet of descent from the brow of the hill over which I had come; then I made a desperate leap across the chasm of middle life, and passed rapidly back over the highway of time.

I stood for a moment by the enchanted pool of youth, where those who sail know not whether the boat be in the sky, or the sky in the water, but sit watching the reflections of themselves and their companions entangled with the stars. I passed through the white birches on the bank to the farther side, then along the fields till I came to the brown house by the river; I did not look carefully at the house, but I knew that the shutters were closed. I went through the orchard, up the hill, climbed the fence, and found

myself at the edge of the beech-woods. There, on a stone, exactly where I expected to find him, sat the little brown kobold.

"Good afternoon," said I.

"Good afternoon," he returned, pleasantly.

"I am glad to find you here," said I.

"I expected you," he answered.

"Then you know what I want?"

"I can guess," replied he.

I sat down on a stone near him, for my knees felt tired after my climb. The kobold looked exactly like the picture of him in my heart, which was taken directly from a portrait that was in an old book I once had. I waited for him to speak, but as he sat still I said, "What is it that I want?"

"You want checkerberries and birch-bark to taste just as they did when you were a child."

"I do indeed," I returned.

"You want to fight violets with me."

"What else?"

"You want to make a burdock basket with a handle that won't fit on straight, and that breaks every time you lift the basket."

"Oh, I do," and I laughed. "What else?"

"You want to make a whistle out of willow, yellow willow, in early spring when the sap is running."

"Of course."

"You want to dig flag-root, and boil it in

sugar until it is all sweet, and then when it is cold, but still sticky, you want to carry it round in your pocket."

"Yes, yes, I do."

"You want to squeeze the blue juice out of the spiderwort flowers, and call it ink——"

"Yes. What else?"

"Don't interrupt me so; I hadn't finished. And you want to be always *thinking* that you are going to make some ink out of pokeweed berries, so you want to be always looking for the berries that you *think* you are going to make ink of."

"Oh, *yes*, I understand."

"You want to eat sassafras leaves because they are sticky; and sassafras bark and sassafras root because they smart; and to cut spicewood because it is spicy; and chew beech leaves because they are sour; and suck the honey-bags of columbine flowers because they are sweet; and eat the false apple of the wild azalea because it has no taste."

"And other things, too?"

"Oh, yes, you must eat the young roots of early grass, and call them onions."

"Anything else?"

"You want to make horsehair rings, three of them, one pure black, one a yellowish-white, and one mixed, fasten them very clumsily together, and wear the prickly knot on the inside of your finger."

"Dear me—yes, yes, yes."

"You want to make a doll out of the rose of Jerusalem, with sash and bonnet-strings of striped grass."

"Of course, and——"

"You want to squeeze the yellow juice of a weed that grows by the stone step on the north side of the house, and put it on your fingers to cure warts."

"Yes, I will, and——"

"You must never kill a toad, because if you do you will find blood in the milk that you have for supper."

"I never will kill a toad," said I.

"You want to tell all the lady-bugs to fly away home because their houses are on fire and the children alone."

"To be sure."

"You want to chew the gum of the spruce, also the gum of cherry trees."

"I do!"

"And to eat the cheeses that grow on marshmallows."

"Yes."

"And you want to make trumpets out of pumpkin-vine stalks, and cornstalk fiddles; you can't make the fiddles ever play, of course."

"Oh, no, of course not, never."

"But you must go on making them just the same."

"Indeed I shall."

"You want to brew rose-water wine."

"Yes."

"And eat the seeds of sweet fern."

"Of course."

"You must steal cinnamon sticks and ground cinnamon and sugar, and carry them round in a wooden pill-box."

"Must I *steal* them?"

"*Certainly* you must, a good many times; and then some evening when the frogs are piping, and the sky is a green-blue, and there is one very white star looking at you, you must tell your mother all about it."

"Oh—yes." After a pause I asked, "What else?"

"Did I mention eating violets with salt?" inquired the kobold.

"No, you said 'fight violets'."

"Well you must eat them, too, sometimes with salt, and sometimes with sugar."

"I'll remember that. What else?"

"Whenever you eat oysters you must always look for a pearl—*always*, no matter whether they are stewed or raw; remember that—always expect to find a pearl."

"I will," said I; "always."

"And you must have a secret hoard." The kobold said this impressively in a low, hollow voice, and I asked him in a whisper, "What of?"

"Of a piece of shoemaker's wax, of one big drop of quicksilver in a homeopathic glass bottle, a broken awl, and four pieces of chalk—one piece red, soft and crumbly, one yellow, and two white bits of different lengths; they must all be so dirty that you have to scratch them to know which is which—you understand that?"

"Oh, yes, I understand."

"And you must have one leather shoe-string, a piece of red sealing-wax, and one very small, 'teenty' bit of goldstone sealing-wax, one piece of iridescent button-paper that crinkles when you bend it, and a button-mould."

"What should I do with the button-mould?"

"Make a top, of course, with a match for a stem."

"Kobold, should I be happy if I had all these things?"

"Perfectly," said he with decision; "but you wouldn't know that you were happy."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"The answer to *that* is a question."

"What is it?"

"Do you know it now?" asked he, with his eyes suddenly turned in toward his own nose, till I couldn't tell whether he was looking at me or not.

A GAME OF SOLITAIRE

PART ONE

THE lamp was lit, and the table drawn close to the fire. In Florence, when the tooth of December is set against the late roses, a fire is a good thing. Katharine, being an artist, was indulging herself in the damp luxury of living in an old palazzo, up five flights of stone stairs, and she tended her fire as if it were a shrine. Katharine's family had a slight inclination toward rheumatism which justified her in the seeming luxury of a blaze.

Naturally, when Josephine Bromley tapped out a Spanish-fandango-sort-of summons on the door, it cost Katharine, knowing immediately who it was, a moment of regret to be obliged to admit so unlooked-for and flighty a factor into her orderly evening.

"It rains," announced Josephine, shedding her wraps from her shoulders to the floor as if they had been autumn leaves or detachable bits of bark that she had done with. "It rains, and it is as dark as Egypt, and you are a dear, Katharine!" she said, making straight to the

fire and spreading out her thin hands before it.

"And you are a disgraceful tramp," responded Katharine with more than a show of sincerity in her tone. "And besides that, you only call me 'a dear' because I happen to have common sense and a fire for you to hover over."

"Yes, that's true, and whatever should we poor good-for-nothings do if it were not for you heaven-born, worthy ones to look after us?" And Josephine, dropping to her knees, leaned forward in rapturous delight toward the blaze. "Yes, you are the dearest of dears, Katharine."

The "dearest of dears" looked scornfully at the pile of wet wraps that lay by the door, and made no response to this flattery, but said, "I suppose, of course, your feet are wet?"

"Of course," admitted Josephine, promptly, as she rose and held up one slim foot after the other, shaking her head with a look of disapprobation in her face, as if her feet had been guilty of an indiscretion against her own supervision.

"And your cough doesn't get any better?"

"Not any better at all," assented Josephine in an alien, pitying tone which she often used toward herself.

"You ought to be sent to an asylum, or home," said Katharine with asperity.

"I should like to go home," murmured Joseph-

ine, plaintively, "if only to see my little great-grandmother once more."

Katharine sniffed. She thought she knew all Josephine's wiles of manner, but she had never before heard of this little great-grandmother that was so dear. "I never heard you speak of your great-grandmother before." The tone seemed to convey a challenge.

"No, maybe not," said Josephine, sweetly; "but you know I must have had one."

"I suppose so. I never gave the matter a thought before. You do without so many things that most people consider essential that I did not know what your ideas might be as to grandmothers."

"My great-grandmother must have been very much like me when she was young," Josephine went on meditatively.

"I wonder, then, that she ever lived to have great-grandchildren." This was said vengefully.

"Oh, she didn't. She only lived to have children."

"Then what in the name of common sense are you sentimentalizing over, with all this nonsense about going home to see her?"

"Why, I always go and visit her when I am at home. She lies in a sunny, cozy little graveyard on a hill. I love to go there. She must have been delightful when she was alive."

"Like yourself, Josephine, as you mentioned a few minutes ago."

"Did I say that? Well, I am sure she must have been very much like me. In the first place, she looks like me: there is a picture of her cut in the gray slate headstone. She is represented as lying in a prettily shaped narrow coffin, and on her arm is the child that died with her. The inscription reads—'In memory of Josephine, the wife of Adoniram Hinton, who departed this life December twenty-sixth, 1785, in the thirtieth year of her age. On her left arm lieth the infant which died with her.' Just at this season, Katharine, and isn't that a pretty thought—she and her baby asleep all these years together?"

"You are cheerful to-night, Josephine," was Katharine's only reply.

Josephine held up her flexible hands and moved them rapidly from side to side before her face "to make oak leaves out of the flames," she explained to Katharine. Then, rising abruptly, she caught up the guitar and waved it to and fro, Spanish fashion, brushing her fingers across it as it swung, making a sort of breathing harmony, to which she hummed an accompaniment in a high voice which was thin but vibrant. She was slender, almost meagre; her dark hair hung in wisps as it had dried after being wet by the rain. It gave her an elfish

look, but with all her uncanny thinness and unexpectedness, there was a fascination about her that baffled Katharine even more than did Josephine's faults, for it seemed to ward off criticism; and it vexed Katharine that she could not be more vexed at this wayward thing.

Josephine never waited for other people's moods to set the pace. She was quite absorbed in her own guitar swinging till the air reminded her of another Spanish song; then she threw herself into a crisp and saucy attitude and broke into a Bolero that ended in a high, shrill note which seemed to fill the room with matadors, señoritas, mantillas, and pomegranates, also with love and treason.

"Carmen," said Katharine, grimly, "will you please attend to the fire?"

But Josephine did not stop her singing. Katharine put a fresh stick on the coals. From where she sat she could see that Josephine's dress was drawing wet hieroglyphics on the waxed floor. The dress was very shabby—a beggar skirt—but worn with picturesque style.

"I am going to be married," abruptly announced Josephine, still thrumming on the guitar. "Yes, I remember now that is what I came to tell you. I knew there was something I meant to speak of."

"And that is why you were so keen to go and

see your little great-grandmother who lives in the churchyard and who is so like you?"

"Perfectly natural in me. I was wondering how she felt when she was engaged to be married—before she was the wife of Adoniram Hinton and had earned her little epitaph!"

"Don't tell me, Josephine, that you are going to marry Smith—the dismal Smith who ought never to have come over here to ruin canvas. He ought to be back to-day in Vermont, helping his father on the farm. He will never earn enough to buy a bushel of potatoes, by art."

"Smithy, little Smithy? Oh, no! He's gone, you know, gone away, disappeared, nobody knows where. Paid all his debts and disappeared, improvident fellow."

"Do you sleep well at night, Josephine, with all your moral responsibilities?"

"No, I don't sleep very well. I have nightmares." This, again, in her grieved and pitying tone. She was busy building up a vast and comfortable nest near the fire and she did not seem to notice the air of disapprobation that radiated from Katharine.

Josephine's accessories always favoured her. That was one reason why it was so hard to attach any ethical obligation to her. Even her atmosphere defied one to attribute responsibilities. Katharine was almost the only person who ever tried to, and she failed. She watched

her now as she propped up the cushions against the copper brocca. This proving insecure, the fire screen was tilted back, the cushions were heaped up, and into them sank Josephine with a contented "There!"

"I suppose, then," remarked Katharine after a pause, "that you are going to throw yourself away on that count who has been dangling around wherever you have been this fall. He is, if possible, one degree worse than Smith. Smith was respectable."

"No, I couldn't bring myself to marry the count. I tried to; really I did," replied Josephine, as if hoping that Katharine would condone her failure in view of her efforts.

"The only other alternative, then, is an old rich man. You have sold yourself."

"Never! Katharine, I am pained. This is an old friend of my mother's."

"I knew it," said Katharine, dejectedly. "I knew it would be, of course, someone who was shiftless, bad, or rich and old."

"An old friend of my mother's," went on Josephine, undisturbedly. "I met him years and years ago in America when mother was living. He came to see us and he took a great fancy to me. I was only a child then, besides, he had a wife," added she, with one of her sudden smiles that always exasperated Katharine; they meant so much or so little, according to

the next remark. Josephine's smile always left one feeling that however it was construed, the opposite would be found to be true.

"Now his wife is dead, and he wants to marry me," continued Josephine.

"Where have you been seeing him?"

"That's part of the fun of it. I haven't been seeing much of him. We have mostly corresponded."

"Oh!" groaned Katharine.

"We shall be married in January," Josephine went on, "here in Florence. He lives in London, but he will go to America to live if I want him to, or anywhere else, for that matter. I am getting my trousseau ready. I bought a dear, delightful brass kettle to-day, big and so comfortable looking."

Katharine laughed in spite of her indignation. "I suppose you will have towers and domes and frescoes in your trousseau, they would be so useful in America."

"I did buy a Madonna to-day," said Josephine impressively, raising herself and clasping her knees with her thin, enthusiastic fingers, "a real old cracked Madonna, with the loveliest little Christus you ever saw. I cleaned it off with my own fingers. I worked for hours over it. I rubbed off all the old sticky varnish (Smithy taught me how just before he disappeared, poor dear) and then I steamed it over

an alcohol bath and the cracks all drew together, and then I varnished it freshly, and now it is my own beautiful Madonna—all my own! And I am going to buy a hundred-franc frame for it. I paid—just think, Katharine, and don't scold—I paid five hundred francs for the picture alone! Oh, isn't it glorious to be rich!"

Katharine looked at the frayed bottom of Josephine's dress, and her wholesome common sense revolted against this mothlike creature's burning wings in the awful to be.

"Josephine," said she, "either don't tell me any more of your doings, or else let me advise you. You will ruin yourself. How dare you spend five hundred francs for anything—anything except actual necessities? And where are you to get your bread and butter if this thing falls through?"

"‘This thing,’ as you curiously call my engagement, is not going to fall through, and besides I never did care much for bread and butter; and so, just for once in my life, I am going to spend every cent I have, or can get hold of, and I am going to spend it for luxuries and I am going to enjoy it. Now to-morrow," said she, as she picked up her wet wraps and surveyed them at arm's length with loathing, "to-morrow I shall buy myself a fur wrap, long, ample, and exclusive, with a dash of the sumptuous to it. No, Katharine, you may save your sermon; I am

going now to be happy and look rich. Later I shall be rich and look happy."

A week later, Josephine's vivacious face blossomed above a fur wrap whose collar just revealed her pink ears. She looked both rich and happy.

PART TWO

"Katharine," said Josephine a few days after she had announced her engagement, "would you believe that one could actually buy and have and hold forever, for one's very own, a great, splendid cathedral lamp that has been burning for nobody knows how many centuries before some saint? Well, believe it or not, I've done it, and I am going to try and live up to it—in spiritual faith and constancy, you know. I shall have it hung right over my dressing table when I get settled in my new home in America. I mean to put every scrap that I have collected here in Italy in my own room, so that I shall never forget how happy I have been here—here in the land of joy!"

"When is your fiancé coming?"

"Oh, to-morrow, or yesterday, or sometime. You see, he was to have come last week but it fell through, all along of some sister of his. Katharine, he is rich, actually rich! It is almost ridiculous my marrying a rich man."

"Quite," was the short reply. "Do you love him?"

"Of course I do. What a question! Only—well, I do not mind confiding to you, dear, that I am just a little disappointed to find he doesn't seem to care one bit about Madonnas. He says they are all trash and bigotry, and I am afraid he is too old to change. I wrote to him yesterday that he must try to look at Madonnas as purely decorative. I am hoping that that will appeal to him."

"Josephine, you are intolerable. You don't deserve to be happy. You are too shallow for anything. I wish something could make you serious."

"Why, Katharine! I thought you of all people would look on marriage as serious. Why, my dear, just being engaged has utterly changed me. I have become conventional. I don't even think of going out shopping without a maid, and you must remember how I used to roam about. The other day, when I went to meet Mr. Griffith, I took Adela along—truly I did."

"Meet him? Meet Mr. Griffith? When and where have you been meeting him?"

"Why, I meant to tell you that he was to have been here last Friday. He wrote that he would arrive by the eleven-thirty train—in the morning, you know. We were all ready for him to breakfast with us. Such a pretty salad—all

green and gold; I arranged it myself in my old majolica bowl, with lots of flowers and fixings. Then came a telegram saying that he must hurry right through Florence on an earlier train, so as to meet his sister who had been very ill somewhere in Egypt, and was on her way to Naples. He arranged it for me to meet him at the train; and then he begged me to go on with him as far as that place with the queer name, where they meet the incoming train from Rome, you know. Of course I went. Sister Maggie couldn't go; I wouldn't let her go to the station with me, but I took Adela, and put her in a second-class compartment. And I did have a perfect dream of a time! Oh, Katharine, isn't joy easy to bear? And I know I looked well in my fur coat."

"How old is Mr. Griffith?"

"Oh, I am sure I don't know—some tedious age, I suppose. There is nothing so tedious as age. We ought to begin at the other end and wind up as babies, I have always thought so."

"Some of us do."

"Oh, if you mean me—I am old, old, old!" Josephine did look a little withered and tired for the moment.

This was a Sunday afternoon near the end of December. She had dropped in to dine with Katharine as was her wont on Sundays. It was the habit of the "boys," as they called the American art students, to call for them later on in the

afternoon and take them for long walks or to the picture galleries.

"Miss Josephine looks like a dove to-day," remarked the tall Johnson to Katharine as they strolled through the Boboli Gardens.

"A dove?" said Katharine, questioningly. She was apt to see things in an ethical light, and it was not without an effort that she disassociated looking and being.

"Yes. You see she has on all the colours, graded from gray to soft fawn, and capped by that iridescent thing round her neck. Her head moves above it just like a dove's head."

"Methinks it is a cat," said Steinway, who prided himself on being rude.

Katharine, who was loyal, resented this. "I wonder," said she, "how any one dares to speak of a woman as if she were a piece of bric-à-brac, a picture or an animal?"

"Oh, now, Miss Dunning, don't be too hard. We fellows don't mean anything, you know. It is only so-called artistic slang."

"And really," joined in Anderson, "it is curious, Miss Katharine, but one does get to looking even at one's friends as if they were posing. Just see Miss Josephine now—how she flattens out into a fresco against that white wall in full sunlight. Why, if I painted her so, the donkeys who write art criticisms would say I had filched from the old frescoes. But

wouldn't it make a sensation in the Salon if I could only hit it off?" Anderson was young.

"Do you know," drawled Spellman to Katharine, "when Miss Bromley sings with her guitar, Spanish fashion, I regularly fall deeply in love with—someone else!"

"I wonder who?" thought Katharine. She only said, "Let us walk faster, please." That was almost the only time she did not know exactly what she wanted.

Bragdon, "the Baltimore Oriole" as he was popularly called (he was very dashing, and inclined to a bit of flame colour in his cravat) was walking with Josephine, and saying impressively: "I don't know what I shall do for the dramatic element when you go away from here. It will cost us fellows a heap of money for theatre tickets to keep us amused then, and it won't be half so artistic."

"You can go to church for nothing," said the dove with serenity.

Soon after this Sunday, Maggie, Josephine's sister, came in for a long talk with Katharine. She had been so busy with all the shopping and the making up of Josephine's wardrobe that she was brimming over with bottled-up emotions. Besides that, nobody who knew Katharine ever considered any undertaking fully begun or done without having had it out with her.

"You never in all your life knew any one so

utterly generous as Josephine is," began Maggie, "and what do you think she has just done? She says she shall have money enough after her marriage, so she has not only made over to me her half of the farm down in Kennebunk, but she has actually sent over to the savings bank and drawn out all her money, and has given me five hundred dollars. She won't have a cent left after she has paid for all her dresses and for all those queer things she dotes on so much. I tell her she is no Christian, but a perfect heathen in her tastes. She only laughs—she does nothing but laugh and sing nowadays. Why, Katharine, the brass things alone that she has bought would fill a ship, I should think; and they smell so brassy. Besides that, she has bought a lot of inlaid chairs and tables and things. I really don't know as I ought to tell you, if she hasn't already; but you know all about that Italian count who wanted to marry her? Well, he failed (he was a gambler, isn't it awful?) he failed, and then shot himself; and now Josephine has gone and bought up most of his old furniture at auction or of some dealer. She says that it has a sentiment for her, and that she is so grateful to have had the dance without paying the piper. I never half understand her, and I can't imagine how we ever came to be born in the same family. But you must come over and see Josephine's clothes.

Every dress is copied from some old picture and she has no end of old beads and jewellery. I feel as if I were living in a dream. I almost dread to wake up. And to think in a month it will be all over!"

"I should suppose Mr. Griffith would remember that you, too, are the daughter of his old friend."

"Yes," assented Maggie, vaguely, "but it isn't as if he had seen me."

"To be candid with you, Maggie" (as if given half a chance, Katharine could ever have been anything but candid), "what puzzles me is that Mr. Griffith dared to think of marrying so young a girl as Josephine. And if he wanted to, why didn't he come down to Florence and get acquainted with her first? He must be nearly twice as old as she."

"Do you know, Katharine, it seems queer to me but he doesn't look so very old. I know he must be, he can't be as young as he looks. I've been over it again and again in my mind and he can't be less than sixty, but he doesn't look thirty-five."

"Oh, you've seen him then?" Katharine had a momentary sense of relief, immediately followed, however, by an uncomfortable feeling that at last Josephine was caught in a fib, for she certainly had said several times that Maggie had not seen Mr. Griffith.

Maggie hurried to say, "No, I haven't seen him but Josephine has his photograph on her dressing table. She puts fresh violets before it every day. His picture does not look old. Josephine is twenty-three, you know, and I am twenty-seven, and mother would have been fifty-seven if she had lived." Maggie knew to a day just how old everybody was, that was her strong point—almost her only one. "Now if mother would have been fifty-seven, he must be older, but he doesn't look anything like it. He is handsome, too."

A thousand little doubts were assailing Katharine, each one so small that it took a whole swarm of them to make a cloud thick enough to be palpable; but the cloud was getting somehow like a gray mist before her mind's eye.

"Miss Bromley has an aptitude for her future rôle of great lady," said Spellman to Katharine one day. "Do you know what she has just done? She has bought Bragdon's 'Arno by Moonlight,' and he is so grateful he cannot speak of it without—well, doing what, if he were a girl, we should call crying; and he is the most undemonstrative fellow in the world. He means to stay here for three more months of study. It will be the making of him."

"Good Lord!" said Katharine under her breath. All at once she had a vision of Josephine as she had appeared that night when she

came in wet, nervous, and wilful, and announced her engagement to Mr. Griffith, while she twanged on her guitar, her shabby gown dripping with rain; and now, only a few weeks later, she was buying pictures, playing fairy god-mother to Bragdon.

Katharine's face was a study. Spellman answered what he thought he read in it, and said, "Oh, she's all right. She is going to marry money, isn't she? I don't mean, of course, marrying for money. Marrying money and marrying for money are very different things."

"Yes, it's different from marrying for money," assented Katharine, gravely.

All the same, that night she took out her bank book, and made a long and careful computation. "For," said she, aloud, as good people will who live much alone, and whose imaginations need the reinforcement of words, "for, as sure as guns, I shall have to use some of it soon, for friendship's sake. I feel shaky about Josephine. I can't help it—I feel very shaky."

PART THREE

Josephine was ready to be married—gowns, brass kettles, Madonnas, and all. She looked a trifle worn, but she was in the gayest of spirits and more full than ever of her vagaries. She

was either exasperatingly gentle after doing the most reprehensible things, or else sweetly contrary, always being of the opposite mood, whatever was expected. She gave teas and lunches at her rooms, where her new artistic belongings created the impression of the fifteenth century having kaleidoscoped with the nineteenth.

Every day she had some new and grotesquely inappropriate possession to exploit, oftentimes bemoaning her inability to buy the little iron devil that presided over the market place, alas, that it was not for sale. "That alone," she declared, "would be worth more to her than all her Madonnas."

Josephine was quite the sensation of Florence at this time and it agreed wonderfully well with her.

One night Katharine was summoned suddenly by a wide-eyed Italian maid, with more emotion than power of speech. She brought a slip of paper from Josephine's sister Maggie, saying, "Come at once; Josephine is very ill." More than this could not be gathered from the maid, whose Neapolitan dialect was beyond the range of Katharine's studies.

Maggie stood shivering by the door when they reached her apartment. She was haggard with distress. "Mr. Griffith is dead," said she, "and I think Josephine will die, too. What

shall I do? She had a letter this afternoon from his sister in London. He died suddenly. Oh, Katharine, this is the awakening. Josephine is almost crazy. She fainted away when she read the letter. She had been restless and excited all day as if she felt that something was going to happen; and she dropped down in a heap on the floor with the letter in her hand. Afterward she laughed and cried horribly. I was afraid of her. I sent for the doctor and he couldn't do anything with her till he gave her something to put her to sleep; and even now she starts and calls out. I know she will die. What shall I do?" And poor Maggie laid her head on Katharine's shoulder and had the first cry that she had found time for since the news had come.

While Katharine tried to comfort her, she herself was going through a certain self-chastisement. She was blaming herself for not feeling the grief of the circumstances more sympathetically, more spontaneously. She was sorry enough for the sobbing Maggie, but there was not that whole-souled oneness in her sympathy for the two desolated sisters that she felt there ought to be. "I wonder," she thought, "if I have been orderly and methodical so long that I have left no room for the expansions of pity." And worse than the distrust of her capacity for sympathy was the black swarm of

doubts which had increased so that they made a cloud in her brain through which Josephine and her dramatic troubles looked farcical and unreal. She seemed to see herself going through some grotesque drama at the bottom of which there was no reality.

To Maggie, however, there was no unreality, either in Josephine's illness, called by the doctor a "nervous collapse," or in their financial position. The five hundred dollars so generously bestowed upon her by Josephine had long ago melted down to less than a third; and in the days that followed the remaining portion melted like the snow on Monte Morello.

Life was very real to Maggie. Josephine's health mended slowly and their finances not at all. Doctor's bills, tradesmen's bills, and all the little luxuries of sickness sucked their slender stream dry. One new expense, as Josephine recovered, threatened to bring them to utter and irretrievable ruin. Josephine was obliged to be out for hours driving in the Cascine where, wrapped in her gray rabbit's-fur cloak, with roses tucked in near her pale face, she received the admiring pity of the voluble Italians who had followed in every detail the poor signorina's drama.

It was now March, and Katharine came to a decision. Action followed always immediately on her decisions. She spent several hours in

writing a letter. This letter was addressed to Mr. J. C. Griffith. After writing it she enclosed it in another carefully worded letter to her bankers in London, asking them to forward it to Mr. J. C. Griffith, if it were possible to obtain that gentleman's address, also asking them as a favour to write a letter to him themselves introducing her, as she was consulting him on a matter of importance, but had not the honour of an acquaintance with him.

She received a letter in reply from her bankers stating that they had delivered the letter to J. C. Griffith, Esq., who happened to be well known to them, having been for many years a customer of theirs, so that there was no delay in transmitting the letter, with one of introduction as requested.

Then Katharine waited; and while she waited she tided over the affairs of the two sisters in her usual orderly, methodical, and practical manner, but she did not think it necessary to tell them that she had written to J. C. Griffith, Esq., and that she awaited with deep interest a letter from him. Occasionally she thanked Heaven devoutly that she knew what she wanted, and was practical enough to get it.

Her letter to Mr. Griffith had been a plain and full statement of the affairs of the two Bromley sisters, including all she knew of Josephine's engagement. She began by asking if

the Mr. Griffith she was now addressing was the Mr. J. C. Griffith who had formerly been a friend of Mrs. Bromley in America, saying: "If you are that friend, the following circumstances are of importance to you. Assuming that you are, I will give them to you as I see them, and I hope that you may help me in my efforts to send the two daughters back to America." She told him that early in the winter Josephine had announced her engagement to a Mr. J. C. Griffith, an old friend of her mother's, and that several weeks had been passed in preparing for the marriage; also that all the fortune of the two girls had been spent. She explained to him that in some adroit manner, either by accident or design, no one but Josephine had ever seen Mr. Griffith, and the engagement had ostensibly been arranged by letter; and that this engagement had been suddenly and shockingly broken off by the news of Mr. Griffith's death, communicated to Josephine by the sister of the man, also by letter. She went on to tell him how ill Josephine had been and still was, and ended by saying: "The whole affair is to me a matter of confusion and I frankly say, of mystery. It is, however, borne in upon me that the Mr. Griffith to whom Josephine was or was supposed to be engaged was not the old friend of her mother's and, acting on that impression, I write and put the matter in your hands. If you are that

friend, will you aid the daughters on their way to America? And may I let you know when they pass through London? As to what you may think it is your duty to do in unravelling the mystery that surrounds the use of your name in the tragedy of Josephine's life, that is a matter outside of my power to suggest. I need not tell you that they do not know of my intercession with you on their behalf. On the receipt of your answer to this, I shall do as circumstances dictate in the matter of making known to them how I came to communicate with you."

One day a letter came to Katharine from J. C. Griffith. He avowed himself to be the one who had been honoured as the friend of Mrs. Bromley, "the most beautiful and fascinating woman I ever met or expect to meet." He said that he remembered Josephine as giving promise to be much like her mother, and that nothing in the world could exceed his delight in putting himself at their (he had first written "her" and then substituted "their") service. He added: "Miss Josephine inspires me with great interest. In her, evidently, a trace of the mother lives, even in the aptitude of her feet for somewhat tangled paths. I am proud to be of service to her."

"Good gracious," said Katharine. "I've fixed it now. The old fool will marry Josephine as sure as my name is Katharine Dunning."

And he did marry Josephine Bromley in just three months after he met her in London.

It was a long time before Katharine could make herself write to Josephine after receiving an erratic little note from her announcing her happy engagement to Mr. J. C. Griffith, without a single reference to the past, or a single explanation of who this Mr. Griffith was. And when Katharine did write, it could hardly be called a congratulatory letter. In fact, it read:

Josephine Bromley, will you tell me whose photograph you had standing on your dressing table here in Florence, framed in old ivory and silver, before which you put fresh violets every day?

And Josephine answered by return mail:

Why, Katharine, you dear old thing, that was only a card that I used in my game of solitaire.

Yours,

JOSEPHINE BROMLEY GRIFFITH.



THE HOUSE THAT STEPHEN BUILT

WELL! What did I tell you! Isn't this a pretty state of things? Stephen living in rooms, and Stephen's house just teeming with those Swedes. I declare! It makes me ill; I do believe that Stephen ought to be put under guardianship, I do really—you're laughing, Eugenia; I suppose it is all very amusing to any one that isn't anything in particular to Stephen; but I tell you, Eugenia, if he were anything to you you would see the utter ridiculousness of the whole thing, instead of standing there and laughing."

"That is why I laugh, it is so very ridiculous, and so like Stephen."

"I call Stephen odd, I don't say that he is ridiculous. He is a victim of circumstances, and it is these circumstances that are absurd and ridiculous."


The eyes of the two women met and they both laughed, one in irritation and one in a sympathetic manner which soon ended in a wistful silence, while the other wiped from her eyes the half-angry tears.

"Now, just look over there," said the irri-

tated woman. "Isn't that house a beauty? It is a home from top to cellar, it isn't merely a house. Stephen planned every detail; he put his heart into it, it is a perfect home."

"It certainly seems to be a home," assented Eugenia, "that is if a lot of happy people living in it makes a home of it. I have seen enough mothers and aunts, and fathers and sisters and brothers and children over there to constitute a fair-sized Republic made up of families. For my part I like a full house."

"So do I, if they are the right people in the right place. When Stephen told me two years ago that he was going to build, I thought that he was doing the most sensible thing of his life. He just beamed when I said that, and intimated that he had expected me to object; I said that I never objected to his doing a sensible thing like this, but that it was the unexpectedly queer things that he was always doing that had made me acquire the objecting habit, and then as the Yankee said, 'He didn't say nothing and I didn't say nothing, and so one word led to another,' and then Stephen fell into one of his silent tempers, and for a week we were conspicuously polite to each other, but we didn't allude to the house. When he got over his miff he brought up the subject again, and I was perfectly amazed to find that he did not in the least mean to get married, as I had supposed of course he would,



but that he was just going to build. 'A home,' he called it, 'a hollow mockery,' I said, and after that I systematically objected to every brick and every stone that went to the building of the house. I criticised everything that he planned to do, right along, till the house was done. He told my husband that it ought to be a thoroughly well-built house as it had had all the benefits of contractor and detractor. I know that I did my part well, anyway. I suppose I am somewhat to blame and that I really drove him into it. Opposition is always the best goad—for a man. Anyway, there it stands, 'Stephen's Folly.'"

There was stillness for a time, and then the older woman continued, as if driven to speak against a restraining, better judgment: "Sometimes in my heart of hearts I think of it as Stephen's and Eugenia's Folly. Perhaps I am wrong there."

Eugenia was not to be decoyed into admission or discussion. She stood surveying the opposite house with interest.

There was evidently some sort of gala doings over there: an awning was stretched from door to pavement; a man in livery was placing stones on the corners of the carpet that made an inviting line of red, running up the steps.

The wind flapped the striped and scalloped awning which gave to the scene a triumphal,

flag-flying effect, while two strictly trimmed box trees in pots stood in formal promise of a function of importance within.

Showy, light costumes containing conscious-looking women stepped from the carriages "which continually do come," chronicled Eugenia for the benefit of the other, whose interest was of too irritable a nature to allow of her watching for herself.

"They all come in carriages, I often walk," remarked Eugenia, meditatively.

"*You* can afford to walk."

"Yes, I suppose so. One would naturally have to ride to one's own wedding, and to one's own funeral, all the other rides are extra."

"I should say that those Swedes over there lived mostly on extras."

"Whose wedding is this, anyway?" asked Eugenia. "I suppose it is the pretty white-haired girl that is to be married, the one that watched us from the upper window when we got out of the carriage day before yesterday."

"I saw at least six heads at the various windows. It might be any one of the aunts or sisters or cousins or friends of the family, I am sure I don't know which one; don't ask me anything, my head is bursting with a racking headache, and it all comes from the idiocy of you two, it really does, Eugenia, and it is of no use for you

to deny it, and to look so cool and remote, and so innocent."

As she said this Mrs. Ransome put her head on one side and surveyed Eugenia like an inquisitive robin, to see how she would receive the arrangement.

As Eugenia kept silence she added, "Did you know that when Stephen was eight years old he nearly had the honour of playing the leading part in a drama that they gave at his school, at the closing of the spring term?"

Eugenia smiled at the digression and said that she probably *had* heard of it but that she had forgotten it, as she had unfortunately forgotten many historical events of interest that ought to be remembered.

"Yes," went on Mrs. Ransome, not at all discouraged by her listener's small ironies. "Yes, he was appointed for a part and learned his lines, and got his make-up, and was as important as if he was to play Hamlet at Drury Lane, and then—are you listening, Eugenia?"

"Of course I am, I am very much interested to find out how you got switched off from the Swedish wedding to Stephen at school, in Hamlet did you say, at the age of eight? Well?"

"Well, it *has* a bearing on this and on many other things; the very day that the play was to come off Stephen came down with the measles, his face was as red as his hair, and one could not

say more at that time. Maybe his hair is a trifle darker now. Yes, he took that very day of all others to begin on his measles."

"Poor little boy!" murmured Eugenia.

"Horrid little boy, I say. The fact is that Stephen never had in all his life the first glimmering of what we call social instinct; now if I am to have an honour or a pleasure do I take that particular time to have any one of the regular diseases that could be had at any time, at one's own convenience, as it were? I tell you, Eugenia, these things are not accidental, they are temperamental. You don't find that any successful person, socially speaking, has disagreeable things at critical moments. A man, for instance, would not have a fit of sneezing just at the instant that he was going to propose to the woman he loved above anything on earth, that is, no one but Stephen would. Stephen might, I am not sure about anything's not happening to Stephen, he would be sure to have something frustrating anyway."

Eugenia smiled and the colour came slowly up till her ears burned. She recalled that in truth every event in the life of Mrs. Ransome had somehow fallen at the opportune moment, and at the same time she remembered guiltily in her own case how some indiscretions, some inopportunities, had frustrated or impeded her at moments of social importance, but her admi-

ration for Mrs. Ransome's superior quality was mixed with a sneaking sympathy for the little red-headed boy that was devoid of the social instinct.

"And then," resumed Stephen's sister, rehearsing her grievances in a way that showed them to have been reduced to order and sequence in her mind, "and then again, when he was to be graduated from college at twenty, he had some part in the exercises—quite an honourable part, for Stephen in the long run is generally successful—what did he do but lie awake all the night before and then go off early in the morning for a long walk to clear his mind, and then he fell asleep in the woods and slept till the whole thing was over. That is the fact, he is subject to some fate, some malignant, obscuring fate that always succeeds in making him ineffective.

"It has been so his whole life," said she, taking fresh breath, for she felt that she was venturing on to thin ice and she went at it with a rush to have it over with, "and I haven't the slightest doubt in the world but that he would have been married long ago if some miserable, little, inconvenient, obstructing fate hadn't come in to frustrate it.

"You are laughing again, Eugenia, you really are! No? Then you are crying. Oh, don't cry, dear, I didn't think you cared— What? You don't care? Well! Why do you show tears,

138 THE HOUSE THAT STEPHEN BUILT

then? I wasn't blaming Stephen, I was just trying to explain to myself how it happens that Stephen is so ineffective, and how it happens that those Swedes have possession over there and Stephen is living all alone in some little cooped-up rooms, Heaven knows how or where.

"There, Eugenia, I know you don't care—you say you do care? Well, I thought so, at least I hoped so, I——"

"I mean," explained Eugenia, resolutely, "I mean that of course I do care about Stephen, only as a friend of course. But I can't help thinking about that little red-headed boy, he must have been so terribly disappointed, you know. I mean about the school, about Hamlet, you know."

"Yes, I think he was disappointed, Eugenia, and so far as I can make out he is just about as red-headed and as disappointed now as he was that day; and yet I can really and truly say that I am glad that you do not care for him, much as I love you both. I am very unselfish about it, and you know as well as I do that you are the only woman that Stephen ever cared a straw for, and yet if he ever tried to tell you so," said Mrs. Ransome in the perfectly measured and distinct manner that she always fell into when she was going to "bear testimony," "if Stephen ever tried to declare his love, some dev-

ilish thing would happen to break him all up; it would be bound to happen. He never will try to tell you, that is one comfort, for Stephen knows his own limitations, his utter ineffectiveness."

"How can you say that!" blazed out Eugenia. "Stephen has done splendid things, things that make you and me look like, like——"

"Like thirty cents," interjected Mrs. Ransome, helpfully.

"Yes, like thirty cents, if that is the smallest thing in the world."

"Stephen is fine," admitted his sister, "and he is brave; I suppose you are thinking of the little military episode in Cuba. That was a fine thing, we were all of us proud of him, but you must remember that he did not get the credit of even that. At a critical moment he just went in at the risk of his own life and did what belonged to another man to do, and though that other man was a coward, to save that other man from disgrace Stephen held his tongue, and the other man got not only the fame but he got his promotion. All this is very fine, no doubt, I admit that, but ineffective so far as Stephen is concerned! A case of suppressed measles, we might call it, he just missed the point as usual—of course. Stephen would give his life or any other little thing to any one in need, except just to himself the neediest one of all, in spite

of his money. Oh, yes! Stephen is all right, it is only that fate of his."

"I think that Stephen is in some ways the finest man I ever knew," Eugenia announced with a candour that was outspoken but yet not entirely incriminating.

"Oh! we all think the world of Stephen, but for all that——" The conclusion was left to the imagination of any one interested enough to fill the blank.

The wedding march was heard from over the way.

"My nerves are all of a frazzle. I hate that march," added Mrs. Ransome, vindictively.

Eugenia still watched the house over the way; it seemed to have a fascination for her, the house that Stephen had built and in which he now had no part except to see that it always kept the look of the perfect home in every outside detail. She wondered how it was inside, and how much of his furnishings were still there, and if he was happy.

Mrs. Ransome, Stephen's only sister, had just run over to America for the summer. She was nowadays, as she said, never at home except by chance, for business kept her husband in London all the year round.

She had not known till her return that Stephen was not living in his own house, and it was this not knowing that made the affair

seem doubly perplexing. Why had he not told her? Why had he left her to hear it from a chance acquaintance here in town (of near friends she had none, that is of the corresponding sort)? In these two days of waiting to see Stephen it had got on her nerves, and the little dynamic explosions of temper to which she had subjected Eugenia had not in the least diminished the potency of the reserved force.

Stephen, too, had always had what in his boyhood were called red-headed tantrums, and though his sister's temper had no particular colour scheme, it had an intensity quite noteworthy.

Two years before, just after Stephen's house had become an accomplished fact, Mrs. Ransome, as subjugated foe to the scheme, had made her peace offering in the form of many pincushions, one for every available room in the house; each pincushion bore on its capacious bosom various kinds of pins such as are in demand in a large and complex family, some of which were quite unknown by name or use to Stephen, but he was innocently charmed at the homelike quality they immediately imparted to the rooms. If his sister had had her own peculiar satisfaction in thus stabbing the symbolic pincushions with descriptive pins, it really was no more than her due, for she had done her duty in combating the house. It was not that

she had disapproved of a house, it was only a house without a wife and family that she so distinctly combated. It was the altar without the gods, the offerings that were so meaningless without a something to sacrifice to. To be sure the pincushions had served their purpose, and it was to be surmised that not a pin of any kind was left to-day; the geometric designs had been as fruitless as had been her wrath.

Stephen came at this moment, and the greetings were as warm between brother and sister as could be wished, although they were constitutional enemies. Eugenia, too, rose to meet him with an almost tender cordiality, which, however, stiffened into a formal greeting as she noted the scrutiny, involuntary as it was, on Mrs. Ransome's part. Her quickness saved her from any further intimate revelations and she said with genuine warmth, "I am so glad to see you and to have a chance to tell you how proud we all were of you in Cuba. We heard of your bravery and the best part of it all was the silent part."

Stephen's eyes were looking straight into Eugenia's and he saw nothing but friendship there—her friendship he had always been sure of.

Stephen sat down by the window. Mrs. Ransome moved her chair back farther into the room—she was going to be very strategical.

Stephen's sittings-down always reminded Eugenia of the dropping of a chain, link by link, and now into her memory came a picture of a day long ago, when Stephen had thus sat down, and certain things had been said and certain other things were almost said but—well! he hadn't exactly sneezed at a crucial moment, as his sister had prophesied that he would do, but—and Eugenia felt herself flushing. Then she heard Mrs. Ransome open the battle by asking abruptly, "Stephen, where in the world are you living? I see your house is rented."

"I am in lodgings down that way," he indicated the way vaguely with a motion of the head.

"Who lives in your new house?" Mrs. Ransome threw the "new house" at him like a missile.

"A family by the name of Hansen."

"I do not remember the name among the old families here, are they new people?"

"Well, no; or yes, you might call them new, it don't much matter what you call them, they are not what you would call in your set."

"Do you move in a set from which I am debarred for any reason?" This was asked with dignity.

"Of course not, I didn't mean that, I only meant that you would not be likely to meet them while you are here."

That "while you are here" was a mistake

born of agitation, and his sister hastened to add:

"I shall be here all summer, you know."

"I meant to say that you would not meet them in the society you move in."

"Is there anything the matter with them?"

"Oh, come now! Frances, you needn't play dull. You understand what I mean, it is a matter of convention, of so-called social distinctions."

"I am not sure that I do understand. Will you call with me on these Hansens?"

"But I do not call on them myself, that is in a social way, our relations are of a purely business nature."

"Dear me! are they so bad as that?"

"They are not bad at all, they are very nice people, honest, respectable, with a little bit of means, and altogether thoroughly nice."

"What rent do they pay?"

"Rent? Why, let me see." He looked over to the house as if he expected to get a memory-refreshing placard. Then he said quietly, "They do not pay any rent, that is not exactly in stated terms."

"Not pay any rent! What do you mean? Why don't you turn them out? It is bad enough to have that sort of people in your house, but to have them cheat you, it is monstrous." His sister was out of breath with indignation—she was quite overwhelming.

"Now, Frances, you are away off, you must have been hearing all sorts of stuff about the house. Just let me tell you about the people, who are above blame in every way and only came to be in the house in the most natural course of events.

"I had meant to tell you all about it on our way out here, but my fate as usual made me miss connections and I couldn't meet you at the wharf or anywhere else. It was too bad. I was ever so mortified, and then I had to stay over for that business of yours, you know, Frances."

As he alluded to his fate, a glance flashed between the two women. Eugenia felt guilty to have been a party to this interchange and turned her face more directly toward Stephen.

"Oh, I understand, now," said Mrs. Ransome with sympathy, "there was not time for you to write to me in London, telling me that you had rented the house; and your bad luck prevented your meeting me in New York, and then you missed us at the wharf, and at the Waldorf, and in fact everywhere, and my tiresome business kept you till now. It was too bad, because I have been worrying unnecessarily. I *did* get the wrong impression from some of these stupid people here. I understood them to say that you hadn't lived in the house for a year or more; it is all too ridiculous. I ought not to have been such an idiot. I am glad it isn't so at all.

"And these people have just moved in? And the terms of rent are still unsettled? And I suppose you are going abroad or something and want to have the house taken care of. I wish you hadn't selected so big a family. However, I dare say it will be all right, it looks neat over there."

All this was said in the sweetest and most helpful manner and she drew her chair nearer to his with sympathetic attention.

She also laid a detaining hand on Eugenia's arm as she rose to leave the two alone together. "Don't go, dear. You want to hear about the house, too, especially as I find I was all wrong in my criticisms.

"And now tell us all about it, Stephen." Stephen crossed his long legs and looked obstinate.

The day was very still except for the laughter and the pervasive mandolins that were an accompaniment of the wedding breakfast over the way. The festivities seemed exuberantly in evidence. There had been several weddings over at the house, but it seemed to Stephen that never before had there been such aggressive hilarity; perhaps he was hearing with the ears of Mrs. Ransome and seeing with the eyes of Eugenia; though he could not make out to his own satisfaction exactly what Eugenia was seeing with her grave eyes. She looked sympathetic,

but then there was his sister; maybe she was sympathetic with *her* point of view.

In his perturbed state of mind he held firmly to one thing only, and that was that he must make it plain that the Swedes were not offenders, pushing themselves into a house where they were not wanted; they must come off scot free. And to do that he must not lose his temper, it was always so hard to find it again; he must keep cool, be explicit, and get away as soon as he could.

He felt terribly guilty, and as if his sister were an inimical judge and Eugenia an utterly non-committal jury.

"After you went away, you know, Frances, I hired a housekeeper. I hired the one you recommended to me. You remember you told me about Sophie Johnson. You said she was a faithful and capable girl. You remember Sophie, don't you?"

Stephen smiled winningly at his sister, her recommending the housekeeper seemed somehow to bring them to a common meeting-ground and to involve Mrs. Ransome pleasantly in the future events.

"Yes, I remember." Mrs. Ransome did not seem to be so deeply involved as he had hoped.

"Well! Sophie married Hansen, she is Mrs. Hansen now."

"Oh!"

Stephen felt quite alone again. Then he explained at length that while Sophie had been his housekeeper, her sister Ada had come to do second work while Sophie officiated in the lower regions.

Mrs. Ransome did not seem to care for instructions as to the division of duties between cook and housemaid and was aggressively silent.

Eugenia, too, was silent, either because she had nothing to say or because she, too, saw that silence was a most discomfiting weapon.

"Things went very smoothly at first, indeed they have always gone smoothly, there hasn't been any trouble, everything is all right, I am perfectly contented. I am glad that I built the house. I like living as I do, it is easier than housekeeping, though that was perfectly easy, too. Sophie managed splendidly. I liked that, too, of course.

"But all this seems so hard to express, to make you take my point of view, and last year—yes, even now, it seems the only point of view, or rather I can't see a better. It all seems very simple, only you seem, or the circumstances seen through your eyes seem, to make me guilty of something heinous. I *feel* guilty. Frankly, now, I began to feel guilty the minute that you wrote that you were coming home for the summer.

"I am not really guilty of anything, but for all

that I feel like a criminal. I wish," said he, getting up and then sitting down again, "I wish someone would put the charge in words. You want to know how it comes that I am not living in the house that I built to live in, and when I try to tell you it all seems so very complicated, and it really is not complicated at all. I just don't live there and someone else does live there."

Here he glanced, by chance, at Eugenia, and suddenly to him the jury seemed to have melted into a friend, or rather the judge and the jury became from that moment merely lookers on, and he became his own judge and his own jury; he took himself before the bar of his own reason; he arraigned himself, was council, and made his own plea. He felt, too, that this time it was the final trial; the verdict would be for life.

"You see," he said after a pause and quite easily now, "after a few weeks in my perfect house it dawned upon me that it was very empty, that brick remained brick and that plaster was just plaster, and that emptiness would be emptiness to the end.

"An old house is always full of memories, they may not be your own memories but they are there; they fill the spaces, they speak of the human beings that have flitted through the rooms. They are still potent though the people have gone away. The autographs of souls, they

may be called, are written everywhere and these autographs are unfading.

"But a new house is an empty house. It was in an empty house that I took my solitary breakfast, in the window of the breakfast room where the sun shone in on June days like this, at just the right angle as I had so carefully planned. The coffee was good, the rolls superlative, and the room was empty.

"I noticed after a while that downstairs they had for breakfast coffee, ham, sausage, and other pleasantly odorous things, and, too, that there were voices of cheer at the breakfast table, sometimes many voices; I fancied that they had lots of friends, and sometimes I distinguished the voice of an old person. Fortunately I could listen without hearing what was said, the voices were pleasant in contrast to my silence and to my thoughts.

"I found after a time that the old Swedish mother had come over to join her daughters and that she was domiciled in the house. I was not consulted in any formal manner but I made it plain that I liked to have her there, it made the household arrangements seem more permanent.

"The old woman and I became quite friendly; she couldn't speak a word of English and I don't think she understood any, but it seemed to be enough for her that my smile was a welcome.

It embarrassed me no end at first, because when we met she would courtesy and then gravely kiss my hand. I couldn't have stood it from one so old, but that I knew, to her, it was only a custom of her country, a long-ago acquired habit, a thing of ancestry, not a personal thing as regarded me. Certainly there was dignity in the way she performed the act. She had perhaps a better acquaintance with her part than I had with mine. And so we smiled at each other and if she played the rôle of one in a humbler class upstairs, I am convinced that she was an autocrat below the salt. In fact, she was so arrogant to her daughters that I, in my mind, dubbed her the Queen Mother.

"Her children dressed her well and I very surely knew that her hands were never lifted in any work. She reigned in the idleness of the upper class on the lower floor."

Eugenia had relaxed her attitude, and a little smile played round her mouth.

"Then the Queen Mother had a most tragic mishap; she fell and broke her hip. All her meals had to be carried up two flights of stairs, and on busy days she was left quite alone for hours. That troubled me somewhat, especially as I, a perfectly able-bodied man, had an entire floor to myself and a little 'lift' that communicated with the kitchen on which my meals could be sent up if I should be ill.

"I thought it all out one night. It was very simple, a proposition that a child would cope with more easily than I had done. Move myself up and move the Swedes down.

"I liked upper rooms. I frankly admit that it was not all generosity on my part, it was justice and self-indulgence.

"I had known the delights of an attic room in my boyhood at the old house in Salem. To be sure I was no longer a boy, nor were the upper rooms in any sense an attic, but they were high up and I liked them.

"A very few alterations made us all comfortable, they on the middle floor and I up higher with a little staircase for myself that led down to the first floor."

Mrs. Ransome sat in somewhat frigid silence. Eugenia laughed appreciatively. He glanced at her. "I suppose it does sound queer, but if I had a pencil, I could show you in a minute how cleverly the staircase was arranged so that I could go down without passing through their hall at all."

"You gave up the front stairs to them, of course," suggested Mrs. Ransome.

"Giving up sounds too self-denying. I ceased to use them, that is all. You see, I did not entertain after the first two months, for it is dreary work entertaining in bachelor fashion; entertaining people that had to be sorted out to fit the

artificial standard of a bachelor home took away all the pleasure. It was a bore and I gave it up. In building the house, the entertaining of guests was a very pleasant anticipation, but next to the emptiness of the house, the filling of it with idle, curious, ill-assorted people was my most disappointing experience.

"As for putting the Swede family on the second floor, there seemed but one point of view, at least there seemed, at that time, but one sane point of view. To-day things seem less clear—something awakens echoes not quite in keeping. I dare say that I shall again see things simply, anyway I had built these rooms for living purposes, for health, and for sickness in case of need.

"The old Queen Mother seemed to supply the human element, here at hand was need, and here were the rooms; good! To be sure it was not *my* mother that was ill, it was not *my* wife, nor was it a child of mine that needed these things that I had provided, it was only a little old woman called the Queen Mother by a derisive whim.

"As I say, it seemed to me then that it was hers by right of need."

Eugenia moved restlessly.

"There were some evolutions in the new house that had a humorous side. I remember wondering at first with great amusement what male

voice it was that I heard at increasingly short intervals below stairs. In time I began to believe that the voice had come permanently to stay. And I became conscious that a masculine form came in and out of the kitchen door with quite the air of residence.

"I am not sure that I should not have resented this had it not gradually dawned upon me that Sophie was married. I do not know that she ever told me so at any one stated time, but I finally learned that she had really been married quite a while before she came to live with me and that she had only gone out to service in order to get a little money to go to housekeeping with, and that the man expected shortly a small inheritance that would help them out in their plans.

"Of course with these new conditions downstairs the hospitalities were increased. And why not! I was not in the mood to entertain upstairs, Swedes are gregarious, I had the means to pay for the small expenditure, and Sophie was economical. Why should any one object to the fact that the dinners were laid and were eaten downstairs instead of upstairs? You don't know till you have tried how easy it is to do differently from what the world expects; the first thing is to *see* differently.

"There was, as I say, an occasional bit of humour brought into my life, and I assure you I

stood in need of such small solace as fell to my lot, for I was lonely.

"For instance, the voice of an infant wailing was a moment of excitement and of humour I think that I blushed a little also, for I remembered having at various times vaguely suggested to Ada that there must be a kitten in distress somewhere below. When I really accepted the voice as that of another human document added to my fast-accumulating collection (I had forgotten to say that at various times various sisters and a cousin or two had temporarily lived in what was now known to me as "our house"), it did not take me so long to discover that the infant needed lighter quarters than it had downstairs, though, to be sure, they had acquired by this time the use of the big dining room as an upstairs living room."

"You may as well tell us how *that* happened, it is all so very interesting," said Mrs. Ransome.

"Why! it was only that the Queen Mother was, all her remaining days, confined to her room, and I offered to take all my meals in the one dining room instead of having my breakfasts and luncheons in the breakfast room, which would make the care of one less room. And then Sophie herself suggested that the smaller room, the breakfast room, was the sunnier and pleasanter; Sophie always looked out for me. So I took that for dining room. At

first the other room was shut up, but I was glad to see some time later that it was occupied in the evenings by the family, and I put extra chairs and things in there till it looked about the pleasantest room in the house. The baby lived there."

By this time Stephen was telling his story entirely to Eugenia and she was wonderfully receptive, smiling or grave with his mood.

"The truth is that when I looked into that room in passing, I saw that human histories were being written. It was not to remain a phantom home, for I had discovered by this time that I, personally, could build the house but I could not create the house soul—the home.

"But I had found a way to outwit fate. I could stand aside and let the life of others flow into the empty spaces, the haunting emptiness that depressed me.

"You see that at bottom it was selfishness, but it was not a preventive selfishness. Life had grown round the things that I had provided. Children have been born under the roof. Sisters and cousins have been married and gone out from there to build other homes, and in time the Queen Mother was carried out of the front door to her last resting place, and whether the door lent dignity to the clay that was carried out, or the clay lent a final dignity to the door, I have not been able to decide. I do not know.

But the round of human life had been enacted under the roof and in time I, too, flitted. I went into lodgings quite large and dignified for one of my small possibilities. And now I am merely so-called owner of the house over 'the way. I hope it looks pleasant to you, Eugenia. I shall never let it go out of my hands, and externally I mean it to represent all that I tried to express in the building."

"Which means," broke in the sister, "that you pay taxes, you make repairs, you pay water rent, gas bills, and I have no doubt that you furnish fuel and——"

"Not all the fuel, only for the furnaces—be just, Frances."

"Yes, and you keep the lawn and the shrubs trimmed, and you buy pretty, formal box and bay trees for the entrance, and you paint and repair the house and pay wages to the house-keeper——"

"No, not full wages, she is on half wages now."

At this Eugenia laughed, it was a laugh that was good to hear, and Stephen laughed with her.

Mrs. Ransome rose. The door shut on the retreating form of the diplomatic and joyfully retreating enemy. Then Eugenia rose and passing behind Stephen's chair she laid her hands over his eyes. Holding them there she said, "Guess whose hands these are."

158 THE HOUSE THAT STEPHEN BUILT

And Stephen answered quite quickly and correctly, though with a rising inflection and much wonder in the tone, "Mine?"

"If you still want them," said Eugenia with a slight tremble in her tones, and holding his eyes very tightly shut.

And this was the house that Stephen built.

IN NETHER SPACES

THE Witch sat rocking her body back and forth while she crooned:

"I launched two ships on a scarlet sea,
One for thy soul and one for me.
Perchance sometime we dead may be,
And I fain would know of the mystery.
Black Cat, hearest thou me?"

"These ships they tossed on the blood-red sea.
Thy ship was staunch and mine sailed free.
The winds blew shrill and the night was dree;
Thine made for its port; but mine, ah, me!
Black Cat, come near to me.

"The scarlet waters hissed in glee,
While the shuddering, bat-like soul of me
Went lurching down to eternity
In the trough of the blood-red, crawling sea.
Black Cat, laugh with me!"

Then the voice of the Witch and her cat went round the world in an unholy shriek; on its way it rattled the shutters of the sleeping folk. The child cried, though it waked not. The priest crossed himself. The nun shivered as she

prayed. The wolf growled; his mouth was wet with the longing for the lamb.

"What was it that thou wert singing, dear Witch?"

"That, my dear Cat, was witch-broth, afflatus, a riddle."

"Was it Poetry?"

"Poetry? No; that word has no meaning."

"What does Poetry mean, then?"

"It does not mean anything. Can't you understand that when something is something that isn't anything else, it is called poetry; is that clear to thee? Of course, there had to be some way to express that idea, so they thought up a word and called it poetry."

"Can you make it, dear Witch?"

"Make it!" she screamed. "He-he-he! It *can't* be made; it grows, it grows in the soul of a poet."

"Oh," purred the sleepy Cat, "it grow-ow-ow-ows, it grow-ow-ow——"

The Witch touched him with her foot.

"Wake up, beauty-black; thou sleepest out of season; night was never made for sleep. I would have thy waking company. I like thee best when thy green eyes glow in the darkness. Wake up, my beauty; thou art drowsed by the sweet, warm breath of hell; wake, else I will transport thee to a colder place. All hells are not warm."

"Dear Witch, dost thou fly to-night? Art thou going to ride thy broomstick?"

"Truly, soul of mine, twixt twelve and three I shall ride abreast of the winds on the track of the lightning. I will take thee, too, my sweet singer; for I know a palace where a prince will be born ere morning; we will celebrate his coming with a song. There are back yards to palaces, aye and high fences, too, where thou canst slink along, and then, black as midnight, and stealthy as death, thou canst creep till thou art under the window, then raise thy voice aloft in shrill natal praises. Sing now, flower of my heart, that I may hear thy voice in my outer ear."

The Cat sings, and from the world rolling through darkness are heard the echoes of the song.

"That was well done, amazingly well done; but rest thee now lest thou dull the shrill edge of thy matchless voice. I promise thee a fine chorus of gray singers to-night. Thou wilt like that, my velvet-throated creature."

"Not to-night, dear Witch; I prithee not to-night; for I, too, know something of import. I heard thee say to thyself that a poet also was to be born to-night, in a gray house on a hill, by a wood."

"What then! What if a poet be born also! May not a prince and a poet hear the same song?"

"Nay, I think the poet, he who is to be a singer himself, should hear other music than mine."

"And why not thine, melodious one?"

"Why, I thought they, the poets, were children of——"

"Hush-sh-sh."

"Well, then, are they not under the care of the white ones?"

"Not always, no, not always," chuckled the Witch. "Not always, black friend of mine; thou jumpest to a conclusion as thy brethren on the earth jump at a mouse."

"*Are* poets then, dear Witch, of thy people?"

"What foolish questions thou askest: they *are*, and then again they are *not*; but they are good game; yea, rare good game. I will tell thee, then, Black Cat, about poets.

"Poets are born into that wonderful borderland where black spirits and white may hunt. Ah, it is the keenest sport I know to go a-poet hunting. White wings and black wings filling the air. The poet sits, his eyes looking inward; he hears the flutter of wings, black wings and white wings, fluttering, fanning, turning, swirling. White wings, black wings, wings fluttering all about his soul; oh, that is sport. Sometimes it is a close game."

The Witch wagged her head.

"Yes, it is worth while to go a-hunting for a

poet's soul, and you can't tell always in a poet's lifetime whether he belongs to the black or to the white wings."

"Why is that?"

"Well, it all seems to lie in the parentheses.

You see the recipe for a poet runs thus:

"Pure light 4 parts (flame may be substituted).

"Sense 1 part (this may be altogether omitted).

"Non-sense 1 part (essential, no substitute).

"Love divine 2 parts } (self-love may be used
in whole or part for
these three portions).

"Love human 1 part }

These be the nine parts that go to the making of a poet. If a poet be made by strict rule he belongs to the white ones. When the substitutes are used we have a chance to get him. It is not often a poet is made by strict measure, and it is a long time before flame can be distinguished from pure light; not till it begins to scorch his own soul by its heat. Pure light has no power to burn the soul—that part of man that is called soul."

"Ah, I see now; and can you have a hand in the making of a poet, dear Witch?"

"Only indirectly. But I think we may safely count on the poet that will be born to-night. Thou canst sing to that end."

"I will sing; but, dear Witch, what are these gray things that fly around and flap in our faces? They are as stupid as June-bugs."

"Those be mistakes, my velvet love; they be born of ignorance and inertia. Poor things, they cannot even die, not being living things. That big one there, tumbling round near the ground, that is a new one; he has just been made by a statesman. Oh! he is a big mistake, a great stupid mistake!" and the old Witch cackles with low glee. "I could tell you more," she said, "if I had time."

"Time? Why, is there such a thing as time at the mouth of hell?"

"Oh, as to that, it is all as you look at it. I am a pretty spry old body. I am pretty busy. Can't you see what I am doing? I am weaving ropes of hell-fire."

"What are they for?"

"Oh, nothing in particular; they are handy to have around. I like best to do things for no special purpose, that is what keeps most folks busy, witches as well as world-folk. All busy, busy, busy, doing nothing. I hate a butterfly; methinks they are much too light of wing."

"I like butterflies," said the Cat, licking its jaws.

THE END



THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.





1

